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HISTORY  
OF  
THE ROMANS  
UNDER THE EMPIRE.

BY  
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FROM THE FOURTH LONDON EDITION.

*WITH A COPIOUS ANALYTICAL INDEX.*

VOL. VI.

NEW YORK:  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,  
443 & 445 BROADWAY.  
1865.



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# HISTORY OF THE ROMANS

## *UNDER THE EMPIRE.*



### CHAPTER LI.

THE WISE AND LIBERAL POLICY OF CLAUDIUS TOWARDS GAUL.—HIS MEASURES FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF DRUIDISM.—HE GIVES A KING TO THE CHERUSCANS AND WITHDRAWS THE ROMAN ARMIES FROM GERMANY.—POLITICAL STATE OF BRITAIN.—INVADED BY AULUS PLAUTIUS (A. U. 796. A. D. 43.).—ARRIVAL OF CLAUDIUS.—DEFEAT OF THE TRINOBANTES.—FURTHER SUCCESES OF PLAUTIUS AND VESPASIAN.—SUBJUGATION OF SOUTHERN BRITAIN.—CAMPAIGNS OF OSTORIUS SCAPULA AGAINST CARACTACUS AND THE SILURES.—FOUNDATION OF THE COLONIA CAMULODUNUM (A. U. 804. A. D. 51.).—FINAL DEFEAT AND CAPTURE OF CARACTACUS.—MAGNANIMITY OF CLAUDIUS.—ACCOUNT OF THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF BRITAIN, AND THE STATIONS OF THE LEGIONS.—SUETONIUS PAULLINUS ROUTS THE BRITONS IN ANGLESEY.—INSURRECTION OF THE ICENI UNDER THEIR QUEEN BOADICEA.—CAMULODUNUM STORMED AND DESTROYED.—SLAUGHTER OF THE ROMANS AND OVERTHROW OF THEIR ESTABLISHMENTS.—RETURN OF SUETONIUS FROM ANGLESEY, AND DEFEAT OF THE ICENI (A. U. 814. A. D. 61.).—FINAL PACIFICATION OF SOUTHERN BRITAIN.

**B**EFORE comparing with the event the presage of our sanguine philosopher, we will briefly dwell on that episode in the history of Claudius, which is to English readers the most interesting in his reign, the invasion and conquest of southern Britain. If this emperor's disposition was cautious rather than enterprising, his military policy was crowned everywhere with solid success: while in this island his own exploits, no less than those of his lieutenants,

were bold and brilliant, and reflect lustre on his administration from the remotest corner of the Roman world.

Claudius, indeed, whenever he directly copied the example of Augustus, approached nearest to the character of a discreet and able sovereign. When he placed himself, as it were, in the capital of Gaul, and traced from that centre the lines of his policy on the frontiers, he best fulfilled the prescriptive functions which every Roman attached to the idea of the Emperor. Born at Lugdunum, on the day when the divinity of Augustus was proclaimed officially in the province, the child of the conqueror of the Germans and the chief and patron of the Gauls, Claudius might himself deserve the appellation of Gaul almost as much as of Roman.<sup>1</sup> It was on this, his native soil, that he ever felt himself strongest. Gaul was the standing-point whence he loved to survey the empire; whence he derived his happiest inspirations; whence he directed his most successful measures, pacific or military. It was from the colony of Lugdunum that he extended his views to the incorporation of the Gaulish with the Roman people; from Lugdunum that he cast his mental vision across the Rhine on the one hand and the British Channel on the other, and resolved to secure both these frontiers of the empire by vigorous aggressions upon the regions beyond them. The Cock, or Gaul, says Seneca, using a play on words which eighteen centuries have rendered venerable, was bravest on his own dunghill.<sup>2</sup> But this jest, intended as a bitter sarcasm, expressed a sober truth. Whatever were his personal failings, the character of Claudius as a Roman emperor, representing the principle of civilization by conquest, is redeemed by the bold and intelligent spirit of his Gaulish policy.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Claud.* 2.: "Lugduni, eo ipso die quo primum ara ibi Augusto dedicata est."

<sup>2</sup> Senec. *Apocol.* 7.: "Gallum in suo sterquilinio plurimum posse." The proverb seems to have been ancient even in the time of Seneca. But the satirist identifies him still further with the land of his nativity: "As might be expected of a Gaul," he says, "Claudius spoiled Rome."

We have already remarked the liberal measures which Claudius adopted for gradually amalgamating the nations beyond the Alps with their southern conquerors. On a people so impulsive as the Gauls, these measures exercised, no doubt, a soothing influence, while they moulded their habits in the prescribed direction. The men who were proud to fight under one Cæsar, were assuredly not less pleased with admission to the senate by another. It would be gratifying, indeed, could we feel warranted in accepting as a sober truth the sneer of Seneca, that Claudius really meant to extend his boon of citizenship to other nations besides the Gauls; that he proposed to be the patron of the Germans, the Britons, the Iberians, and the Africans: we should rejoice to have solid ground for ascribing to him a broad and general view for the reformation of the Roman polity, the extinction of the Italian municipium in the empire of the world, rather than a mere act of bounty towards a single favoured people. But of this we have no distinct evidence. All we can say with certainty is that he threw open the gates of Rome to the inhabitants of Gaul, and applied the principles of the first Cæsar with the frankness not unworthy of that bold emancipator. If it were not the first step taken by the emperors in that happy direction, neither, it was evident, could it be the last.

His liberal policy towards the Gauls.

Claudius, however, it may be affirmed with certainty, had a special motive besides personal partiality for this favour to the Gauls. No people within the circuit of Roman dominion more required at this moment to be conciliated; none held within its bosom such dangerous elements of disaffection. Under Tiberius a serious revolt had been quelled by a statesman's firm resolution. Under Caius the germ of a civil war had been extinguished, as it appears, by the happy boldness of a madman. But whenever disturbances should again arise, whether from discontent among the natives, or from the irregular ambition of a Roman official, there existed in the deep-rooted influence of the Druids, and the wide ramifica-

Disgust and suspicion with which the Romans regarded Druidism.



tions of their system, still alive though proscribed and persecuted, the seeds of a violent outbreak of Celtic nationality. With the scanty knowledge we possess of the real character and history of Druidism, we have no means of testing the vague notions entertained by the Romans themselves of the extent to which its authority prevailed. If indeed we may believe their representations, this singular form of priestcraft was recognised at this period throughout wider regions than perhaps any other creed of Paganism. Its centre was in the north of Gaul, at Dreux, or Chartres, or Autun; but its most illustrious fanes were to be sought on the coasts of Brittany, in the sacred islands off the mouth of the Loire; in the temples of Stonehenge or Abury in our own country; in the Isle of Anglesey and possibly also of Man.<sup>1</sup> From the shores of the Gulf of Lyons to the Firth of Clyde a common system of usage and ceremonial attested the identity of the Druidism of the Gauls and Britons. It was among the Britons, indeed, as we are told, that the system was taught in its greatest purity; and such was the facility of communication between the two great members of the Celtic family, that the youth of Gaul constantly crossed the Channel to seek the highest instruction in its tenets. In Gaul the Roman ruler sought to modify and control this dangerous antagonist by assuring the natives that their religion was merely another form of the Greek and Italian polytheism:<sup>2</sup> to them Druidism was officially declared to be a special modification of truths

<sup>1</sup> The silence of the Roman authorities on Stonehenge and the other presumed Druidical monuments of Britain is no doubt remarkable; yet it seems extravagant to suppose, with some modern theorists, that they are posterior to the Roman period. They are first referred to by Henry of Huntingdon, early in the twelfth century, as then of unfathomed antiquity, and they form, unquestionably, part of a common system of monumental structures, scattered from Carnae in Brittany through a great part of northern and central Europe.

<sup>2</sup> Lucan, i. 450. :—

“Et vos barbaricos ritus moremque sinistram  
Sacrorum, Druidæ, positis repetistis ab armis:  
Solis nosse Deos et cœli numina vobis,  
Aut solis nescire datum est.”

common to the wisest and most advanced nations of antiquity. But the fear with which he really regarded it, as an implacable enemy, an inspired rival, was betrayed by the dark colours he allowed to be thrown over it at home. The bondage in which it kept the minds of its devotees, the atrocity of its human sacrifices, the daring falsehood of its promise of immortality, were exposed to the disgust and contempt of the votaries of Olympus. Its rites were barbarous; its ceremonies were sinister and gloomy. The priests alone, it was averred, pretended in their pride to the occult science which apprehends, or rather misapprehends, the Gods.<sup>1</sup> The horrors of the sacred groves, on which no birds alighted, in which no breezes rustled, their scarred and leafless trunks, their bloody altar stumps, the dripping of their black fountains, the mutterings of their riven caves, the ghastly visages of their shapeless idols, were enhanced with all the art of poetic colouring, and contrasted with the graceful forms of Nymphs and Dryads in their fair retreats, with the frank and cheerful character of the southern religions, the faith of innocence, mirth, and trust. Amidst the importunate doubts and fears regarding the future, or rather in the despair of another life which Paganism now generally acknowledged, the Roman was exasperated at the Druid's assertion of the transmigration of souls. *Yet happy*, he exclaimed in the bitterness of his spirit, *were the Gauls and Britons in their error, insensible as it made them to the greatest of all fears, the fear of death: in this faith they rushed gaily and reck-*

<sup>1</sup> Lucan, iii. 399. :—

“Lucus erat longo nunquam violatus ab ævo . . . . .  
 Hunc non ruricolæ Panes, nemorumque potentes  
 Sylvani Nymphæque tenent: sed barbara ritu  
 Sacra deum, structæ sacris feralibus aræ,  
 Omnis et humanis lustrata cruoribus arbos . . . . .  
 Illis et volucres metuunt insistere ramis  
 Et lustris recubare feræ; nec ventus in illas  
 Incubuit sylvas . . . . . Tum plurima nigris  
 Fontibus unda cadit . . . . . Jam fama ferebat  
 Sæpe cavas motu terræ mugire cavernas . . . . .”

*lessly on the sword ; their generous souls disdaining to spare the life that would so soon revive.*<sup>1</sup>

Augustus, at the same time that he offered his own divinity as an object of worship to the Gauls at Lugdunum, had forbidden the exercise of Druidical rites in Rome. Henceforth the fierce and gloomy superstition of the North was branded as impious and immoral, hurtful to the manners of the citizens who might be tempted to mingle in it, and even to the public safety. But Augustus had not ventured to prohibit the natives of the transalpine provinces from using their ancient rights on their own soil. Tiberius seems to have pressed on the hostile system with a still stronger hand : the revolt of the Æduans and of Sacrovir, who, as we have seen, was probably himself a Druid, may have exasperated his enmity.<sup>2</sup> It was reserved, however, for Claudius to decree its entire abolition, and to enforce with severity the edict of proscription. Of the measures, indeed, which he took, and the details of his persecution, we have no information : a single anecdote preserved by Pliny seems to show that, in Rome, at least it was searching and sanguinary. A Gaulish chief, he tells us, a Vocontian of the Narbonensis, who had obtained Roman knighthood, was delivered to the executioner because on his coming to Rome on private business, the Druid's talisman called the serpent's egg was discovered upon his person.<sup>3</sup> The jealousy

Proscription of  
Druidism by  
Augustus, Ti-  
berius, and  
Claudius.

γῆτος?

<sup>1</sup> Lucan, i. 460. :—

“ Felices errore suo quos ille timorum  
Maximus haud urget leti metus : inde ruendi  
In ferrum mens prona viris, animæque capaces  
Mortis, et ignavum redituræ parcere vitæ.”

<sup>2</sup> Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xxx. 4. : “ Tiberii Cæsaris principatus sustulit Druidas, et hoc genus vatum medicorumque.” Some have supposed that Pliny has made a mistake, or that he means Tiberius Claudius : it seems more likely that he refers to a partial proscription of Druidism by the successor of Augustus. Strabo (iv. 4. p. 198.) had spoken under the second principate of the diligence of the Romans in abolishing the worst atrocities of the Celtic cults.

<sup>3</sup> Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xxix. 3. The serpent's egg (ovum anguinum) seems to have been an echinite or other fossil substance, to which the Druids ascribed a



of the government and the curious interest of the people, were most excited, perhaps, by the magical powers claimed by the priests of Gaul, and the prophetic pretensions of its bards.

While these harsh measures for crushing the national spirit of the Gauls, and extirpating their leaders, were in course of execution, the Roman government was not less anxious to advance the eagles beyond their frontiers, and to remove from their borders the dangerous spectacle of freedom. On the side of Germany, indeed, the dominion of the conquerors had long been prepared by artifice more sure than arms. After the execution of Gætulicus, the legions, which he had debauched, had been exercised by his successor, Galba, in some desultory operations against the Chatti; but generally the peace of the frontiers had been preserved, while the Germans were rapidly assimilating themselves to the manners of their more powerful and civilized neighbours. Since the death of Arminius, the Cherusans, once so formidable, had been greatly enfeebled by internal anarchy. At length, unable to govern themselves, they solicited a chief from the emperor. The son of Flavius, the brother of Arminius, had been educated at Rome, in the civilization of the South, with a view, no doubt, to future service. The Cherusans were willing to accept a kinsman of their late hero: Claudius seized the opportunity for advancing his own views; and the youth went forth from the school of monarchy, the first foreigner, as the emperor reminded him, who, born at Rome, a citizen and not a captive or a hostage, had been raised by Roman hands to an independent sovereignty. Italicus, such was the name the German adopted, had been trained to the skilful use both of the Roman and the German weapons; beneath the varnish of Italian cultivation he retained some also of the coarse tastes of his ancient countrymen; and he seems to have possessed popular manners, which for a time ingratiated him with the jealous barbarians. But presently offence was mysterious origin, and not less mysterious virtues. It was worn round the neck as an amulet.

Claudius gives  
a king to the  
Cherusans.

given; suspicions and enmities arose; the charge of Roman manners was promptly made against him, and connected with the imputation of foreign inclinations, and a disposition to sacrifice to the stranger the weal of the fatherland. It was in vain, urged his enemies, that he boasted himself the nephew of Arminius the patriot: was he not the son of Flavius the renegade? Italicus, on the other hand, reminded the disaffected that he had come among them at their own invitation, and challenged his enemies to decide by arms whether he deserved by his prowess to claim kinship with their bravest champion. He succeeded, after some vicissitudes, in putting down the open attempts to unseat him; but the Cherusicans continued, under his rule, to be disturbed by dissensions, to the advantage of the Romans, who looked on complacently, and abstained from interfering.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the Chauci, who had formed a closer connexion with Rome, and had profited for many years by their state of peaceful dependence, which gave an opening to their commerce with Gaul and Britain, had ventured, at the instigation of a piratical chief named Gennaseus, to seek plunder by incursions into the lower German province. Sanguinius, the commander in this quarter, had recently died, and the defence of the district was for a time neglected. This man was succeeded, however, by Domitius Corbulo, an active and enterprising soldier, who promptly restored discipline in the camps, repaired the flotilla of the Rhine and ocean, and pursued the depredators into all their harbours. He chastised the Frisii, who had dared to withhold their stipulated tribute; and without actually annexing their country to the Roman dominions, planted among them a government of the friends and clients of the empire, supported by the presence of a military force. At the same time he sought to subdue the Chauci by corrupting some of their chiefs, and by the murder of Gennaseus, towards whom, as a mere pirate, no terms of honour need be kept. This attempt on the outlaw's life was

Campaign of  
Corbulo in Ger-  
many.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xi. 16, 17.



indeed successful; nevertheless, the result was not so propitious as Corbulo had anticipated. The Chauci, long wavering in their dependence, were decided against Rome by irritation at this treacherous dealing, and flew to arms with frantic ardour. Possibly this was what Corbulo desired; he had scattered with his own hand the seed of rebellion, the crop had ripened, and he was about to reap the harvest. But he had worse enemies at the court of Claudius than the Chauci on the Rhine. He was there represented as seeking war for his own aggrandizement. If he failed, the empire would suffer; if he triumphed, the emperor himself might find him dangerous. Such were the insinuations, it was alleged, by which the timid prince was induced to stop the progress of conquest in Germany, and recall his standards behind the Rhine. But Claudius doubtless knew that peace was now a more effective auxiliary than war; and he preferred holding out the hand of treacherous friendship to engaging in superfluous hostilities. The order to retire reached Corbulo when he was actually planting a camp in the territory of the Chauci for the site of a fortress, or a colony. He read in it the danger to which he was exposed from the emperor's jealousy: the contempt in which he should be held by the arrogant barbarians, the mockery to which he should be subjected even from his own allies. Nevertheless, with the old Roman endurance, he stifled every sign of anger or murmur of remonstrance; and muttering only, *how fortunate were once the Roman captains*, gave the signal for retreat. With the withdrawal of the legions, the Chauci relapsed into their fatal torpor. It was necessary, however, to furnish the soldiers with employment; and, forbidden to exercise them in war, Corbulo now engaged them in a great work of engineering, which has long outlasted the conquests of Rome beyond the Rhine. He cut a canal from the Maas, near its mouth, to the northern branch of the Rhine parallel to the line of coast, to effect an easy communication between his stations, in a region where the yielding soil could scarce bear the weight of a military causeway, to drain at the same

A. D. 47.  
A. U. 800.

time the lowlands, and oppose dykes to the encroachment of the ocean.<sup>1</sup> Before the adoption of the modern railroad, the canal of Corbulo was the common highway of traffic between Rotterdam and Leyden; and its plodding trekschuyt may still faithfully represent the old Roman tow-boat of the Pomptine marshes.<sup>2</sup>

The religion of the Germans was distinct from that of the Gauls; and from this reason, perhaps, as well as from the long animosity between the two nations, the Romans were less apprehensive of the effect which might be produced on the one bank by the view of surviving independence on the other. But with the island of Britain, more distant yet not remote, the case was different. Though the Channel was a broader barrier than the Rhine, the communication of ideas, of hopes, fears and enmities, was more close and constant between the Gauls and Britons than between the Gauls and Germans. There was nearer affinity in blood, language and manners; there were no recollections of mutual hostility; no memorials on either side of conquest or encroachment; above all, Druidism was paramount among both, and the ministers of the Gallic rites looked to the sacred recesses of the northern island as the real hearth and home of their own religious polity. The persecution of the Druids on the continent drove them back to the spot where they had imbibed their own mystic lore; and the recital of their wrongs inflamed the indignation of

The Romans  
more jealous of  
freedom in  
Britain than in  
Germany.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xi. 18–20. “This great work still forms a principal drain of the province of Holland between the city of Leyden and the village of Sluys on the Maas.”—Greenwood, *Hist. of the Germans*, i. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Comp. Horace’s *Journey to Brundisium*. A more important work of this kind was projected about the year 812 by L. Vetus, a Roman commander in northern Gaul. He proposed to unite the Saone and Moselle by a canal, to expedite the transmission of troops from the South; but was dissuaded from the enterprise by Ælius Gracilis, the legatus of the Belgic province, as likely to bring him into suspicion with the emperor. Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 53. Steininger (*Gesch. der Trevirer*, p. 86.) laments, that up to this day so useful a work should have been neglected, though it presents no great difficulties.

the children of that heroic race which could boast that it had repulsed the mighty Cæsar with ignominy from its shores.<sup>1</sup>

The tribute which Julius Cæsar had pretended to impose on some chiefs of southern Britain had been rarely offered, and never exacted. Augustus, we have seen, had once threatened to recover it in person by force of arms: it is possible that some slight concessions then made to his demands sufficed to divert him from an enterprise he had no real desire to undertake.<sup>2</sup> Under Tiberius, the affairs of Britain excited no political interest at Rome. But the rapid progress of Roman civilization in northern Gaul, the growth of the cities on the banks of the teeming Rhine-stream, the spread of commercial relations along the shores of Belgium, Holland, and Friesland, had elicited a spirit of friendly intercourse from the British side of the ocean. Londinium, a city which escaped the notice of Cæsar, had become in the time of Claudius a great emporium of trade. Camulodunum was the residence of the chief potentate of southern Britain; the fertile plains of our eastern provinces were studded with numerous towns and villages; the vessels of the Thames, the Colne, and the Wensum reciprocated traffic with those of the Rhine, the Maas, and the Scheldt: the coinage of Cunobelinus, king of the Trinobantes, of which specimens still exist, attests, by its skilful workmanship and its Latin legends, an intimate

Relation of  
Britain with  
the continent.

<sup>1</sup> Names, indeed, of Gaulish tribes, and those possibly of German origin, may be noticed in the south-eastern parts of Britain, but there is no record of a hostile invasion, no allusion to hostile reminiscences; and the existence of Druidical remains on the very spots where these tribes were seated speaks in favour of their actual affinity to the original stock.

<sup>2</sup> My attention has been directed to a fragment of Livy recently produced by Schneidewin, from which it would appear that Augustus actually set foot in Britain: "Cæsar Augustus populo Romano nuntiat, regressus a Britannia insula, totum orbem terrarum tam bello quam amicitia Romano imperio subditum." The passage seems to be a fragment of an epitome, and is probably not strictly faithful to the sense of the author. See *The Christian Reformer* for Jan. 1857, p. 7. Suetonius (*Claud.* 16.) and Eutropius (vii. 13.) say expressly that no Roman set foot in Britain from Julius Cæsar to Claudius.



and friendly connexion between Britain and Gaul, or possibly Italy.<sup>1</sup> We may conjecture, that the Romans themselves, in the interval since the invasion of Cæsar, had settled as traders on our island.

The south-eastern parts of Britain seem to have been occupied at this period by three principal nations, the Regni in Sussex, the Trinobantes in Hertford and Essex, the Iceni in Norfolk and Suffolk. The Trinobantes were already known as the most powerful of the British tribes in the time of Cæsar.

Chief States  
of Southern  
Britain; the  
Trinobantes,  
the Regni, and  
the Iceni.

Their leader, Cassivellaunus, had assumed the direction of a league against the invader. His authority had been still further extended by his successors. If we may believe that the great system of roads, to which we give the name of British, was actually the work of our Celtic ancestors, extending as they do across the length and breadth of the island from Richborough to the Menai Straits, from the mouth of the Axe to the Wash and Humber, it would seem to indicate that there was once a time when the whole of South Britain at least was subject to some common authority. Of such a political combination, however, there is certainly no trace in history: possibly the union extended only to matters of religion.<sup>2</sup> Cunobelinus indeed, the greatest of

<sup>1</sup> In the time of Cæsar, according to his own account, the Britons had no coinage, and used only rude pieces of iron by weight. Eckhel expresses some doubt of the genuineness of the few British coins which were known in his day. Their number, however, has now been greatly increased, and modern numismatists have assiduously collected and catalogued them. I am informed that they are generally rather coarse imitations of Macedonian types, derived, no doubt, from Gaul and Massilia.

<sup>2</sup> Cæsar describes the Britons as in a state of barbarism, which completely disappears in the accounts of Tacitus and Dion. We hear no more now of their painted bodies, their scythed chariots, their hideous sacrifices, their revolting concubinage. Can we suppose that Cæsar was willing to represent the country, which he found it inconvenient to subdue, as more miserable than it really was? Or could the hundred years of intercourse, which had since intervened, with the pacified tribes of Gaul and Germany, have effected so remarkable a change? The existence of a common system of roads throughout the country, which is admitted by some of the best modern antiquarians, seems a

the descendants of Cassivellaunus, seems to have united a large part of the island under his control or influence. From his capital at Camulodunum, near the mouth of the Colne in Essex, to which he had transferred the royal residence from Verulamium, for the advantage perhaps of intercourse with Gaul and Germany, he extended his sway over the south and centre of Britain, and may possibly have been recognised as paramount in arms by the pure Celtic races on the Severn and even beyond it. The people of Kent and Sussex may also, in some sense, have acknowledged his sovereignty. But the Iceni were independent, jealous, and perhaps hostile to him. To this nation also a number of petty tribes were subservient, extending across the centre of the island from the Wash to the Avon and Severn. Between the Romans and these proud and self-confident islanders, causes of quarrel were never wanting; it only remained for the southern conquerors hovering on their coasts, and mingling in all their dealings, to choose their own moment for aggression. The petty chiefs who chanced to be expelled from their own country by domestic dissensions, generally sought a refuge, which was never denied them, within the Roman dominions, and the kings of the Trinobantes or Iceni sometimes ventured to demand that they should be surrendered. On the other hand, the fugitives were constantly urging the Roman government to restore them by arms or influence to their forfeited rights at home, and holding out splendid promises of tribute and submission in return. Between these two classes of applicants the Romans would not long hesitate. When Adminius, one of the sons of Cunobelin, solicited Caius to recover for him his share in the paternal inheritance, the

strong proof of a common civilization. These lines of road do not correspond with the Roman Itineraries; and some of them, as those which lead from Seaton to Yarmouth, and from Southampton to Richborough, do not seem to belong to a Roman system. They point to a native traffic, carried on by land and water, between Armorica and the Frisian or Danish coasts. But if not Roman, there is no later period of an united Britain to which they can well be ascribed.



emperor prepared, as we have seen, to enforce his claims with a military demonstration. The threatened invasion was, however, postponed, whether its ostensible object were gained or not. Of Adminius and his pretensions we hear no more; but other fugitives and other claimants soon appeared upon the scene.

The solicitations of Bericus to Claudius were the counterpart to those of Adminius to his predecessor, though of this

Claudius prepares for the invasion of Britain. suppliant we know even less than of the former. But he too was a chief expatriated by domestic enemies, he too was demanded in extradition by

his countrymen, but retained by the policy rather than the compassion of the Romans; he too succeeded in getting a Roman army equipped for his restoration.<sup>1</sup> Claudius could assert, like Augustus before him, that the tribute of Britain had been long withheld. Like Augustus, he was determined to chastise the defaulters, and take firmer sureties than before for future submission. Like Augustus, he proposed to lead the eagles in person, to earn a title and a triumph, as his ancestors had done, on the field of battle. But he could not spare the time, he would not perhaps encounter the toil, required for the conquest of the powerful islanders. Aulus Plautius, who held a high command in Gaul, was chosen to conduct the invasion, and prepare the way for the emperor

A. D. 43.  
A. U. 796.

by a preliminary campaign in the year of the city 796. It was now about a hundred years since the epoch of Cæsar's first descent on Britain. The futile and almost ignominious result of that attempt was still remembered among the legions of the northern provinces. The storms and shoals of the ocean had since then caused more than one disaster to their arms. The inhospitable character of the natives of either coast had more than once been proved,<sup>2</sup> and when Plautinus announced to his soldiers

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lx. 19. This Bericus may probably have been the Veric of some British coins.

<sup>2</sup> Hor. *Od.* iii. 3.: "Visam Britannos hospitibus feros." Yet the British chiefs had sent back the shipwrecked sailors of Germanicus (*Tac. Ann.* ii. 24.).

the service they were destined for, they refused to follow his standards, and broke out into murmurs and even mutiny. Plautius reported the condition of his camp to Rome. The emperor, bent on his purpose, determined to enforce discipline. He sent Narcissus to the camp, to bring the turbulent legionaries to obedience. They received him with cries of *Io Saturnalia!* mocking the arrogant freedman as a slave who ventured to assume the character of his master. But, satisfied with their jest, they seem to have returned at last of their own accord to their duty, and submitted to their chief's commands.

Four legions, the Second, the Ninth, the Fourteenth and the Twentieth, all noted afterwards in British history, were selected for this distant adventure. Plautius, we are told, arrayed his forces in three divisions, to Aulus Plautius invades Britain. which he assigned different places of landing, in order to baffle the defence, and secure a footing in one quarter, if repulsed in another. I shall have occasion to show how little reliance can be placed on the details of this expedition, meagre as they are, recorded by Dion only; we have, however, no choice but to relate them as they have been reported, and point out their inconsistency as we proceed. The ships encountered adverse weather, and were more than once driven back; but the appearance of a meteor which shot from East to West, restored the courage of the soldiers, by following the direction in which they were bound. It would seem then that their course lay from the Belgian roadsteads on either side the Itian promontory, to the British above and below the South Foreland; from the ship-builders' creeks at the efflux of the Aa and the Liane to the havens or low accessible beaches of Richborough, Dover and Lymne. Whatever were the points at which they came to land, they seem to have encountered no resistance. Soon afterwards we shall find the Regni in friendly relations with the Romans, and it is possible that the invaders had already tampered with their

These men, however, brought home a terrific account of the sea and land monsters they had encountered. Moreover, the poverty of the unclad islanders was still remembered in the traditions of the camps.

fidelity to the common cause, and engaged their influence over the coast of Kent and Sussex. It was reported, however, that the natives had been lulled into false security by the rumours sedulously wafted from Gaul of the disaffection of the legions, and neglected in consequence the measures necessary for opposing their disembarkation.<sup>1</sup>

The sons of the great Cunobelin, Caractacus and Togodumnus, wielded the forces of the Trinobantes and held a primacy of rank and power among the chiefs of South Britain. Like their ancestor Cassivellaun, and following the usual tactics of their German neighbours, they abstained from meeting the invader in the field, and ensconced themselves in the forests, or behind the rivers, where he could only attack them at a disadvantage. Plantius, however, pushed boldly forward, worsted both princes in succession, and received the submission of some clans of the Boduni, as they are called by Dion, the same, it is generally supposed, as the Dobuni of Ptolemy, the inhabitants of modern Gloucestershire.<sup>2</sup> Placing a garrison in this district, he advanced to the banks of a broad river, which the Britons deemed impassable; but a squadron of Batavian cavalry, trained to swim the Rhine and Wahal, dashed boldly across it, and dislodged them from their position by striking at the horses which drew their chariots. A force under Flavius Vespasianus penetrated into the unknown regions beyond, and obtained, not without great hazards, some further successes. Such was the command in which this brave and strenuous captain was first *shown to the Fates*, which from henceforth destined him for empire.<sup>3</sup> His empire and his dynasty soon passed away; but Providence designed him for its instrument in a work of wider and more lasting interest. On the plains of Britain Vespasian learnt the art of war, which he was to practise among the defiles of Palestine, and against the despair and fury of the Jews.

Successes of  
Plantius and his  
lieutenant Vespasianus.

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lx. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Ptol. *Geogr.* ii. 3. 25. 28. Smith's *Dict. of Class. Geography*.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Agric.* 13.: "Monstratus fatis Vespasianus."



From the mention of the Boduni or Dobuni it is natural to suppose that the broad stream above mentioned was the Severn near its mouth. Yet it is difficult to imagine that Plautius can have advanced so far into the country in the few weeks since his landing, and the language of Dion seems presently to contradict it. The defeated Britons, says this writer, retired to the Thames, and placed that river between themselves and the Romans in the lowest portion of its course, where it swells to a great breadth with the tidal waters of the ocean. The invaders, he continues, attempting to follow them, fell, in their ignorance of the ground, into great danger: but again the Batavians swam their horses across the river, and the barbarians were routed once more with much slaughter. In this battle Togodumnus was slain: Caraetacus had perhaps retired to the West, where we shall meet with him again. A few only of the Romans were lost in the pursuit among the marshes.<sup>1</sup>

Not probable  
that Plautius  
crossed the  
Severn.

Plautius, it would seem, now for the first time firmly planted himself on the north bank of the Thames. It is impossible to suppose that if he had once reached the Severn, he would have again fallen back behind a barrier which he must have already crossed or doubled. Nor, as I have said, is there time allowed for such distant operations. For he now sent to summon Claudius to pass over into Britain, and assist personally in the final reduction of the twice broken Trinobantes. He awaited behind his entrenchments his chief's arrival. Claudius made his appearance before the end of the military season. I can discover no river that will answer the description of the historian, except the Medway; and if any reliance is to be placed on the terms in which Dion expresses himself, we must believe that instead of traversing half the island unopposed, Plautius first met the Britons in the neighbourhood of Maidstone or Rochester. The three divisions of his army may have converged from the three most fre-

He awaits the  
arrival of Clau-  
dius on the  
North bank of  
the Thames.

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lx. 20.

quented of the Kentish ports, at Canterbury. But it is better to confess the impossibility of tracing his movements. Dion is throughout very indistinct in his conception of British history and geography, and when Tacitus himself comes to our aid, we shall find his knowledge also slender and superficial.

Plautius had been instructed to call the emperor to his assistance, if difficulties should occur that deserved his august interference. The legatus was perhaps courtier enough to divine his master's wishes, and to represent the state of affairs according to his desire.

Claudius enters  
Britain in person and subdues the Trinobantes.

Claudius held himself ready for the expected summons, and there can have been no delay in his reply to it. Perhaps he had already gone forth to meet it. Leaving the conduct of affairs at home to Vitellius, his colleague in the consulship, he proceeded by the route of Ostia and Massilia, attended by a retinue of officers and soldiers, and a train of elephants already bespoken for the service. His resolution was tried by adverse winds, which twice drove him back, not without peril, from the coast of Gaul.<sup>1</sup> When at last he landed, his course was directed partly along the military roads, partly by the convenient channels of the navigable rivers, till he reached the coasts of the British sea. At Gesoriacum he embarked for the opposite shores of Cantium, and speedily reached the legions in their encampment beyond the Thames. The soldiers, long held in the leash in expectation of his arrival, were eager to spring upon the foe. With the emperor himself at their head, a spectacle not beheld since the days of the valiant Julius, they traversed the level plains of the Trinobantes, which afforded no defensible position, till the natives were compelled to stand at bay before the stockades which encircled their capital Camulodunum. It is not perhaps too bold a conjecture that the lines which can still be traced from the Colne to a little wooded stream called the Roman river, drawn across the approach to a tract of twenty or thirty square miles surrounded on every

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Claud.* 17.

other side by water, indicate the ramparts of this British oppidum.<sup>1</sup> Within this inclosed space there was ample room not only for the palace of the chief and the cabins of his people, but for the grazing land of their flocks and herds in seasons of foreign attack; while, resting on the sea in its rear, it commanded the means of reinforcement, and, if necessary, of flight. But the fate of the capital was decided by the issue of the encounter which took place before it. The Trinobantes were routed. They surrendered their city, and, with it, their national freedom and independence. The victory was complete: the subjection of the enemy assured: within sixteen days from his landing in Britain, Claudius had broken a powerful kingdom, and accomplished a substantial conquest. He left it to Plautius to secure by the usual methods the fruits of this signal success, and returned himself immediately to Rome, from which he had not been absent more than six months altogether.<sup>2</sup>

Claudius had gained a victory: some indeed were found to assert in after times that the foe had never met him in the field, and had yielded city and country without a blow: but his soldiers undoubtedly had hailed him repeatedly, in the short space of sixteen days, with the title of Imperator, and he was qualified by the purport of his laurelled despatches to claim the crowning honour

Claudius  
triumphs at  
Rome.

<sup>1</sup> These lines have a fosse traceable on their *western* side; they were therefore defences against attack from the land, not from the sea. At one or two points they are strengthened by small rectangular castella, which may be later Roman additions; and it is difficult to point out any other period of our history when the defence of the little peninsula on which Colchester stands could have given occasion to works of this nature. It is asserted, moreover, that British coins have been found in these works.

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lx. 21. Suetonius (*Claud.* 17.) declares that the conquest was bloodless: "Sine ullo prælio aut sanguine intra paucissimos dies parte insulæ in deditionem recepta sexto quam profectus erat mense Romam rediit, triumphavitque." He evidently wishes to disparage the emperor's exploit, as unworthy of a triumph. At a later period it was not less extravagantly magnified. Orosius says of Claudius: "Orcadas etiam insulas ultra Britanniam in Oceano positas Romano adjecit imperio." (vii. 5.).



of a triumph as the meed of conduct and valour. We have seen already how the senate hastened to decree him this distinction; how he received the appellation of Britannicus; how arches crowned with trophies were erected to him in Rome and at Gessoriacum; how, finally, he deprecated the evil eye of Nemesis by an act of ungainly humiliation. Cheap and frivolous as these honours now were, the conquests of Claudius were really solid and extensive, and with due precaution on the part of his lieutenants, might have been firmly established from that moment. They were soon destined, indeed, to suffer a grave disaster: but this, which broke for a moment the steady current of victory, served only to apprise the conquerors of the real condition of their position, and compel them to complete the unfinished work of subjugation, and settle at once the fate of Britain for four hundred years.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The high estimation in which the exploits of Claudius were held appears from the inscription (imperfect and conjecturally supplied) upon his arch of triumph—

TI. CLAUDIO Drusi f. Cæsari  
 AUGUSTO Germanico Pio  
 PONTIFICI Max. Trib. pot. ix.  
 COS. V. IMPERATORI xvi. pat. patriæ  
 SENATUS POPULUSQUE Rom. quod  
 REGES BRITANNIÆ perduelles sine  
 ULLA JACTURA eeleriter eeperit (?)  
 GENTESQ. extremarum Orcadum (?)  
 PRIMUS INDICIO facto R. imperio adjecerit (?)

See Bunsen's *Rom.*, iii. 3. p. 91., Orell. *Inscr.* 715.; and compare the lines in Seneca's *Medea*, which the moderns have regarded as a prophecy, but may really have been meant to indicate a recent event in history:

Venient annis sæcula seris  
 Quibus Oceanus vincula rerum  
 Laxet, et ingens pateat tellus,  
 Tiphysque novos detegat orbes,  
 Nec sit terris ultima Thule."

Compare again:

"Parcite O Divi, veniam precamur  
 Vivat ut tutus mare qui subegit."

See the preface of Lipsius to his edition of Seneca's works. These passages would be more interesting could we feel more confidence in their presumed authorship.

It seems not impossible that the prompt submission of the Trinobantes in the East was caused by the retreat of the main forces of the nation westward; for it is in the western parts of the island that we next hear of the operations of the invaders, and the chief who most obstinately resists them is still the Trinobantine Caractacus. Vespasianus, whose deserts have already been mentioned, attracted the notice of the emperor during his brief visit to the camp. He was now sent in command of the second legion to reduce the Belgæ and Damnonii, who occupied the south-western regions from the Solent to the Axe, and from the Axe to the Tamar or the Land's End. From the Isle of Wight, the Vectis of the Romans, to the rugged barrier of Dartmoor Forest, he engaged them in thirty battles. Many a fosse and mound, many a tumulus of heroes' bones, on the hills of Wilts and Dorset, still bears silent testimony to these obscure and nameless combats; and the narrow gorge of the Teign, deeply scarred with alternately round and square entrenchments, was the scene, perhaps, of the last desperate struggles for the garden of Britain.<sup>1</sup>

Vespasian's advance into the West.

It may be conjectured that the conquest of this part of the island was facilitated by the cowardice or treachery of the people of the East. Cogidubnus, king of the Regni, acknowledged himself a vassal of the Romans, and consented to be their instrument for the enslavement of his countrymen. He attached himself as a client to the emperor, and assumed the

Subjugation of the Regni and cowardly submission of the Iceni.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 44., *Agric.* 13, 14. Eutropius gives the number of thirty-two battles. Suet. (*Vespas.* 4.): "Duas validissimas gentes, superque viginti oppida, et insulam Vectem, Britanniae proximam, in ditionem redegit." In extending the operations westward of the Isle of Wight I indulge only in conjecture; but the numerous coins of Claudius which have been found at Isca Damnoniorum, or Exeter (see Shortt's *Isca Antiqua*), indicate a very early occupation of this distant position. Isca may still have retained the importance it evidently once possessed as the emporium of the Mediterranean tin trade. Coins of the Greek dynasties of Syria and Egypt have been found there in great abundance.

name of Tiberius Claudius.<sup>1</sup> The Iceni, also, instead of uniting with the Trinobantes in the defence of their common freedom, appear to have yielded without a blow to the influence of the invaders. From their position on the eastern coast, and their habits of intercourse with the Roman traders of the Rhine and Scheldt, they may have learnt already to tremble at the power of the conquerors, or to covet their luxuries. As far, therefore, as their authority extended to the wild forests of the interior, and possibly even to the coast of the Irish Sea, they seem to have retained the native tribes in stolid inactivity, while their neighbours were successively robbed of independence. Their king Prasutagus, blindly rejoicing in the downfall of the chiefs of Camulodunum, opened his own strongholds to the visits of Roman officials, and allowed himself insensibly to fall under the tutelage of tribunes and quæstors. His offer of a small tribute, in acknowledgment of deference or subjection to Rome, was soon made a pretext for vexatious impositions; and the encroachments thus hazarded on the liberties of his people goaded them at last to resistance and insurrection.<sup>2</sup>

Plautius was recalled to Rome, to enjoy the reward of his services, in the year 800. His successor Ostorius Scapula found himself on his arrival beset by the refractory Britons in various quarters, and putting his forces at once in marching order, aimed a severe blow in the direction from which the annoyance seemed chiefly to proceed. In order to confine the still un-

Campaign of  
Ostorius Scapula.

A. D. 47.

A. U. 800.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Agric.* 14.: "Quædam civitates Cogidubno Regi donatæ (is ad nostram usque memoriam fidissimus mansit) vetere ac jam pridem recepta populi Romani consuetudine, ut haberet instrumenta servitutis et Reges." The name of Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus is preserved in the curious inscription at Chichester.

<sup>2</sup> There can be no doubt that Frisians, Saxons, and Danes had settled on the eastern coasts of Britain before the Roman invasion. It seems probable that the Anglian character of the population of Norfolk and Suffolk dates from the pre-Roman period. Hence we might account for the want of union between the Iceni and the Trinobantes. The name Iceni is still evidently retained in many localities of their district, as in Icknield, Ickworth, Exning, &c.,



conquered tribes within the boundary of the Severn, he drew a double line of posts along the course of that river and the Avon, into the heart of the island.<sup>1</sup> This last measure, perhaps, roused the jealousy of the Iceni, or inflamed their discontent. It seems to have trenched on some rights of sovereignty exercised by them in those parts, and threatened to overawe them, faithful as they had proved themselves, no less than the turbulent barbarians of the West. They flew suddenly to arms, suffered a severe defeat, and again relapsed into a state of sullen submission. Peace being thus restored in his rear, Ostorius had leisure to penetrate into the country of the Cangi, a tribe which our antiquaries have commonly placed in the furthest corner of Carnarvonshire, the promontory or peninsula of the Cangani.<sup>2</sup> There is not much, indeed, to support this bold conjecture: nevertheless, wherever the true locality is to be sought, the relations of the Roman commander now extended far over Britain; for he was recalled from his attack upon the Cangi by a hostile movement of the Brigantes, a people who undoubtedly held the regions north of the Mersey, and whose power extended from sea to sea.<sup>3</sup> No sooner were these ill-combined efforts repressed, and submission secured by a judicious mixture of energy and moderation, than the attention of Ostorius was called to the coercion of the Silures, the people of South Wales, who continued, under the guidance of Caractacus, to threaten the

and has certainly a Tuetonic sound. It has been suggested that, though written by the Greeks *Ἰκηννοί*, the second syllable, which disappears in all these words, was probably short.

<sup>1</sup> The ground on which we tread here, following the general consent of our critics from Camden downwards, is most uncertain. Neither the names nor the construction can be made out clearly from the MSS. of Tacitus. Ritter reads: "Cunctaque castris Avonam usque et Sabrinam fluvios cohibere parat." Tac. *Ann.* xii. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Ptol. *Geogr.* ii. 3. Tacitus, however, declares that Ostorius nearly reached the Irish sea: "Ductus in Cangos exercitus . . . vastati agri . . . jam ventum haud procul mari quod Hiberniam insulam aspectat." *Ann.* xii. 32. Ritter reads "Decantos," a name found also in Ptolemy, for "Cangos." Neither tribe is mentioned elsewhere.

<sup>3</sup> Seneca calls them "cæruleos scuta Brigantas" (*Apocol.* 12).

outposts of the Roman power, and obstruct their communications. From the name of their chief, who seems, as before observed, to have been the son of Cunobelin, it would appear that the Silures, far westward as their district lay, bore some relation of dependence or descent to the leading nation of the

Foundation of  
the colony of  
Camulodunum.

A. D. 50.

A. U. 803.

East. This relation is again indicated by the establishment, of which we are now apprised, of a colony at Camulodunum, on purpose to check and overawe them.<sup>1</sup> Ostorius was commissioned

by the emperor to plant a military colony in Britain, to become the stronghold of the Roman power in the island. For this purpose the site of the Trinobantine capital, far as it was removed from the seat of hostilities at the time, was chosen. If far from the Severn and the mountains of Siluria, it lay so much the nearer to Gaul, and the centre of the Roman resources. It was the proper base of the Roman operations for the entire subjugation of the island. If not in the direct route from Gessoriacum and Lugdunum to Britain, it was not far distant from it; it lay to the north of the broad Thames; it overshadowed the dubious territories of the Iceni; while the prompt submission of the Regni on the shores of the channel, might avail to exempt them from the burden of so unwelcome a guest in their peaceful country. Farther, the establishment of a colony in the country of the Trinobantes, involving as it did the confiscation of a portion of their soil, the utter subjection of their people, the overthrow of their civil polity, might be inflicted on them to punish the protracted resistance of their chief among the distant tribes to whom he had betaken himself. On all these accounts the foundation of the colony of Camulodunum may not seem so irrelevant, as some have considered it, to the contest now pending between the Romans and the Silures.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Such is the express declaration of Tacitus: "Id quo promptius veniret (i. e. the reduction of the Silures), Colonia Camulodunum . . . deducitur."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xii. 32. It is on account of this presumed incongruity that some antiquarians have actually supposed that Camulodunum was somewhere in North Wales.

Under the republic the colony was a direct offshoot from the parent city: a number of citizens were told off by lot to occupy, like a swarm of bees, to which they were commonly compared, their appointed station; and the soil of the conquered land was appropriated to them as their *ager* or national territory. As an offset from a nation of soldiers the colonists were themselves all soldiers, and their new city, founded on the principles of the old, was in fact a stationary camp, furnished with the same civil and military appliances as the metropolis itself; not only with the streets and houses, the walls and ditch, but with the temples and tribunals, above all with the sacred Augural, or spot on which the auspices might be duly observed. But the citizen had now lost most of his military traditions. When he migrated to a foreign settlement, it was generally as a private trader or adventurer. The civilian could no longer be induced to relinquish his peaceful indulgences and go forth armed and booted, in the prospect of a slender patrimony to be cultivated with toil and defended with his blood. On the other hand the paid defenders of the state,—the military profession, as it had now become,—were no longer fit to return, after many years of service, to the staid habits of the municipium from which they had been levied: they retained no taste for the amenities of civil life, and might even be dangerous in the crowded streets and among the mutinous rabble of a vicious city. The colony was now merely a convenient receptacle for the discharged veterans of the camp. Transferred from active duty in the field or the parade, to which they were no longer equal, they were expected to maintain, as armed pensioners of the state, the terror of the Roman name on the frontiers by their proud demeanour and habits of discipline, rather than by the strength of hands now drooping at their sides. The lands of the Trinobantes were wrested from their ancient possessors and conveyed to the new intruders: the veterans established themselves in the dwellings of the hapless natives, desecrated their holy places, applied to their own use their

Character of the  
Roman colony  
in Britain.



goods and chattels, perhaps even their wives and daughters; and if they left them any rights at all, set up tribunals of their own to decide every matter in dispute with them. The colonists in an assembly of their own, like the comitia of the Roman people, chose their own officers, and governed themselves by their own regulations and by-laws; holding themselves ever ready to fly to arms in defence of their common usurpation. In the colony of Camulodunum the Britons beheld an image, rude indeed, and distorted, of the camp on the Rhine or Danube, combined with the city on the Tiber. They enjoyed, as far as they could learn to appreciate it, a faint reflex of the civilization of the South, and were taught to ascribe the fortune of their conquerors to the favour of strange divinities, to whom altars were erected and victims slain. But to none of these did they see such honour paid

Inauguration of  
the worship of  
Claudius at Ca-  
mulodunum.

as to Claudius himself, in the name of none were so many vows conceived, as of the emperor whose person they had once beheld visibly among them; of whom they still heard by report, as the presiding genius of the empire, the centre of the world's adoration. A temple of unusual size and splendour was erected to this divinity in the colony of Camulodunum, or the Conquering Claudian, as it was officially styled, special estates were granted for its service, and the most distinguished among the Britons were invited to enrol themselves in the college of the Claudian Flamens.<sup>1</sup>

In one respect, however, the new colony fell short both of the city and the camp, on the plan of which it was designed. The capital of the Trinobantes has already been described as a vast enclosure for retreat from invasion, occupied by clusters of straggling huts and cabins, with no continuous streets, still less with any regular fortifications. Such a mode of agglomeration, common to the Britons with the Germans, and at least the

Security of the  
Romans.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 31.; Orell. *Inscript.* 208.: "Colonia Victricensis quæ est in Britannia Camuloduni."

northern Gauls, was altogether foreign to the habits of the Romans, who dwelt always in compact masses of habitations, laid out on plans comparatively regular, and defended by works of military art. The oppidum was the British, the urbs was the Roman city. But the veterans who now occupied the stronghold of Cunobelin were too indolent, it seems, to trace the lines of a fortress for their own protection: they found the site of their new dwellings agreeable, the houses even of the Britons were to the rude inmates of the tent not inconvenient: they furnished themselves with a temple, a senate-house, and even a theatre for the amusement of their idleness; they erected a statue of Victory to commemorate their triumph; but they delayed to construct the necessary defences, and in contemptuous disregard for the conquered enemy, continued to enjoy their new-acquired ease with no apprehensions for their future security.<sup>1</sup> However slight might be the influence of this type of southern culture upon the distant Silures, the Iceni, whose frontier bordered closely upon it, were powerfully affected. They beheld with admiration the advance of luxury and splendour, and acquiesced once more, with increasing fervour, in the terms of unequal alliance proffered by the Romans.

Thus doubly secured by the influence of arms and arts in his rear, Ostorius was enabled to bring the whole weight of his forces to bear on the still unconquered Silures.

For nine years Caractacus, at the head of the independent Britons, had maintained the conquest with the invaders. The genius of this patriot chief, the first of our national heroes, may be estimated, not from victories, of which the envious foe has left us no account, but from the length of his gallant resistance, and the magnitude of the operations which it was necessary to direct against him. How often he may have burst from the mountains of Wales, and swept with his avenging squadrons the fields of the Roman settlers on the Severn and the Avon,—how often

Resistance of  
Caractacus and  
the Silures.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 31.: “Dum amœnitati prius quam usui consulitur.”

he may have plunged again into his fastnesses, and led the pursuers into snares prepared for them beyond the Wye and the Usk,—remains for ever buried in the oblivion which has descended on the heroic deeds of the enemies of Rome. Worn out, or starved out, or circumvented perchance by the toils ever closing around him, he made a last effort to remove the seat of war from the country of the Silures to that of the Ordovices or North Wales, the common boundary of the two lying probably between the Wye and the Teme.<sup>1</sup> Ostorius having returned from his foray among the Cangî, having chastised and pacified the Brigantes, and established at the same time his colony at Camulodunum, collected all his strength to crush this last effort of resistance. To attack the Silures he would descend probably from his northern stations along the course of the Severn; the Britons, hovering on the eastern flanks of the Welsh mountains, would draw him up one of their lateral valleys to the westward; but whether he forced his passage by the gorges of the Verniew, or the upper Severn, by the Clun, the Teme, or the Wye, seems impossible to determine. Each of these routes has had its advocates, and to this day the surviving descendants of the Britons contend with generous emulation for the honour of the discovery. All along the frontier of the principality every hill crowned with an old entrenchment, and fronted by a stream, has been claimed as the scene of the last struggle of British independence; there are at least six Richmonds in the field, and the discreet historian must decide between them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the distances marked in the XII. and XIII. *Itinera* of Antoninus it has been supposed that Branogenium (of the Ordovices) is at Leintwardine on the Teme, and Magna (of the Silures) at Kentchester, a little north of the Wye. The boundary, therefore, would lie between these two rivers.

<sup>2</sup> The spots which have been most confidently assigned for the last battle of Caractacus are Coxall Knoll, on the Teme, near Leintwardine (Roy); Cefn Carnedd, west of the Severn, near Llanidloes (Hartshorne, *Salop. Antiq.* p. 63); Caer Caradoc, on the Clun, in Shropshire (Gough's *Camden*, iii. p. 3, 13); and the Breiddhen hills, near Welshpool, on the Severn (*Archæol. Cambr.* April, 1851). A Roman camp, now called Castel Collen, may be traced as far west



Caractacus took up a position of his own choosing, where the means both of approach and of retreat were most convenient for himself and unfavourable to the enemy. It was defended in part by a steep and lofty acclivity; in part by stones rudely thrown together; a stream with no frequented ford flowed before it, and chosen bands of his best armed and bravest warriors were stationed in front of its defences.<sup>1</sup> To the spirit and eloquence of the chief the Britons responded with shouts of enthusiasm, and each tribe bound itself by the oaths it held most sacred, to stand its ground or fall, if it must fall, fighting. Ostorius, on his part, was amazed at the ardour of men whom he supposed to be beaten, cowed, and driven hopelessly to bay. He was even disconcerted at the strength of the British position, and the swarms which defended it. It was the eagerness of the soldiers rather than his own courage or judgment that determined him to give the signal for attack. The stream was crossed without difficulty, for every legionary was a swimmer, and the Britons had no engines

Last battle and  
overthrow of  
Caractacus.

as the Ython, near Rhayader, and here, too, a suitable locality might be found. But all is misty conjecture. It would seem that Ostorius, intending to strike at the centre of Siluria, was drawn north-westward by the movements of Caractacus into the country of the Ordovices, along one of the lateral valleys that issue from the Welsh mountains. Tacitus says only: "Transfert bellum in Ordovices." *Ann.* xii. 33.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. l. c. "Præfluebat amnis vado incerto." This seems to imply, not that the stream was actually deep or rapid, but that crossing no road at the spot, it had no accustomed ford. Even the season of the year is not mentioned, so that we cannot tell whether the water was above or below its ordinary height. It seems, however, to have been crossed without difficulty. The character of Coxall Knoll, which many years ago I examined with more faith than I can now indulge in, is not inconsistent with the narrative. The river is now a narrow and shallow stream, at least in the middle of summer, and deeply tinged by the peat-mosses through which it flows: "Visus adhuc amnis veteri de clade rubere." The hill, steep in front, but easily accessible from the rear, is crowned with considerable earthworks. On descending from the spot which I believed to be the scene of the eclipse of British freedom, I found an Italian organ-boy making sport at an alehouse door to a group of Welsh peasants. I could not fail to moralize with Tacitus: "Rebus humanis inest quidam orbis."

for hurling missiles from a distance, nor were they noted even for the rude artillery of bows and slings. But they defended their rampart obstinately with poles and javelins, and from behind it dealt wounds and death upon the assailants till the Romans could form the tortoise, approach to the foot of the wall, tear down its uncemented materials, and bursting in, challenge them to combat hand to hand. Unequal to the shock of the Roman array, the Britons retreated up the hill; the Romans, both the light and the heavy-armed, pressed gallantly upon them, and imperfectly as they were equipped, they could withstand neither the sword and pilum of the legionary, nor the lance and spear of the allies. The victory, quickly decided, was brilliant and complete. The wife and daughter of Caractacus were taken; his brothers threw down their arms and surrendered.<sup>1</sup>

The brave chief himself escaped from the slaughter, evaded the pursuit, and found an asylum for a time in the territory of the Brigantes, leaving all the south open to the invaders. He might hope to remove the contest to the northern parts of the island, a land of streams and mountains like his own long-defended Siluria: but Cartismandua, the female chief of this nation (for though married she seems herself, rather than her husband Venutius, to have been actual ruler of the Brigantes), was determined by her own fears and interests to betray him to the Romans. The fame of his nine years' struggle had penetrated beyond the British isles and the Gaulish provinces; and when he was led captive through

Caractacus betrayed by Cartismandua. Exhibited at Rome and pardoned by Claudius.

<sup>1</sup> Caractacus, Togodumnus, and Adminius have been mentioned from Dion as the sons of Cunobelin. We have disposed of the two last; but Tacitus seems here to refer to other surviving brothers of the family. From this presumed discrepancy, coupled with the remoteness of the campaigns of Caractacus from the country of Cunobelin, it has been imagined that Dion was in error, and that the British hero was a native chief of the remote Silures, and not a Trinobantine. So also the Welsh traditions represent Caractacus as a Silurian; but are not these the traditions of a people hemmed in between the Severn and the Irish Channel, who had long forgotten that they had once extended to the German Ocean?

the streets of Rome, great was the curiosity of the citizens to behold the hero who had rivalled the renown of Arminius and Tacfarinas. The triumph of Claudius had been solemnized before; but the emperor gratified his vanity by exhibiting the British prince before the imperial tribunal. A grand military spectacle was devised, in which Claudius appeared seated before the gates of the prætorian camp, attended by his guards, and surrounded by the multitude of citizens. Agrippina, clothed like himself in a military garb, took her seat on the tribunal by his side, the ensigns of a Roman army floating over her head. The slaves and clients of the vanquished prince were first led before them, with the glittering trophies of his arms and accoutrements. Behind these marched the brothers, the wife, and the tender daughter of the hero, and their pusillanimous wailings moved no pity in the spectators. But the bearing of Caractacus himself, who closed the train of captives, was noble and worthy of his noble cause: nor did it fail to excite the admiration it deserved. He was permitted to address the emperor. He reminded Claudius that the obstinacy of his resistance enhanced the glory of his defeat; were he now ignominiously put to death, the fate of so many worsted enemies of Rome, his name and exploits would be soon forgotten; but if bid to live, they would be eternally remembered, as a memorial of the emperor's clemency. The imperial historian was easily moved by an appeal to his yearning for historic celebrity.<sup>1</sup> He granted the lives of his illustrious captives, and bade them give thanks, not to himself only but to his consort, who shared with him the toils and distinctions of empire. It was politic as well as merciful to spare the legitimate claimant of a British throne; to keep him at Rome to be employed as occasion might suggest: and thus Caractacus, we may believe, was retained, together with his family, in honourable custody, till

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xii. 36-38. Such an act of clemency in a Roman emperor must not be passed by without especial notice. Claudius stands in honourable contrast to the murderers of Pontius, of Perses, of Jugurtha, and Vercingetorix.



he grew old in long-deferred hope of restoration. They were enrolled perhaps among the clients of the Claudian house; and indulgence may be challenged for the pleasing conjecture, that *Claudia the foreigner, Claudia the offspring of the painted Britons*, whose charms and genius are celebrated by Martial, was actually the child of the hero Caractacus.<sup>1</sup>

The victory had been the most complete, and in its results the most important, that had yet occurred in Britain; and there was no mean servility in the senators extolling the emperor's fame and fortune to the skies, and comparing him to a Scipio and a Paulus, who had exhibited a Syphax and a Perses to the applauding citizens. To Ostorius was accorded the triumphal ornaments; but he had not yet leisure to repose on his laurels, for the Britons flew again to arms on the capture of their champion, and maintained on the skirts of their mountain fastnesses a warfare of forays and surprises, which still kept the Romans on the alert. Again and again defeated, they still found means to revenge their losses. Harassed and decimated, they retaliated by bloody massacres. They were roused to despair, however fruitless, by the ferocious threats of the prefect, who vowed to destroy and extinguish their very name, as that of the Sigambri, once so formidable, had been utterly obliterated in Germany.<sup>2</sup>

On the death of Ostorius, which shortly ensued from chagrin, it is said, as much as from fatigue, the province was entrusted to Didius, sent in haste from Rome to take the command. During the interval, while the legions perhaps were careless or reluctant in their obedience to an inferior officer, the Roman arms suffered an ignominious check from

<sup>1</sup> Martial, ii. 54., iv. 13. This was the faith of Fuller, Stillingfleet, and our old ecclesiastical historians, who identified this princess at the same time with Claudia, the convert of St. Paul. More favour has been recently shown to the ingenious hypothesis of Mr. Williams, who infers, from the remarkable inscription at Chichester, that the Claudia of Martial and St. Paul was daughter of king Cogidubnus. On this subject I shall have occasion to speak again.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xii. 38, 39.

the Silures, and the province itself seemed for a moment to lie at their mercy. The arrival of Didius, old and inactive as he was, served to brace again the discipline of his armies, and they recovered their superiority. But the transient shock their reputation had suffered broke the charm of success. Cartismandua, who had delivered Caractacus to the Romans, and in return had been upheld by their influence against the indignation of her countrymen, was now expelled from her realm by a popular insurrection. Relying on her foreign defenders, she had driven away her mock-husband Venutius, slain some of his kinsmen, and degraded herself to the embrace of a menial. The Brigantes took the side of the injured husband, placed him, as a noted warrior, at their head, attacked the queen in her stronghold, and had nearly succeeded in overpowering her, when Didius interfered, and released her from her peril. But the new prefect did not attempt to recover the footing of the Romans in the North. He allowed Venutius to seat himself once more on the throne of the Brigantes, and was content with keeping watch over his power, and occasionally advancing an outpost beyond his borders. Such was the state of affairs which continued to subsist in this quarter twenty years later.<sup>1</sup>

Cartismandua  
overthrown by  
her own sub-  
jects.

Thus unsettled were the limits of the Roman occupation at the close of the reign of Claudius. The southern part of the island from the Stour to the Exe and Severn formed a compact and organized province, from which only the realm of Cogidubnus, retaining still the character of a dependent sovereignty, is to be subtracted.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the Stour, again, the territory of the Iceni constituted another extraneous dependency. The government of the province was administered from Camulodunum, as its capital; and the whole country was overawed by the martial

The Roman  
province of  
Britain.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xii. 40.; *Hist.* iii. 45.; *Agric.* 14.: "Parta a prioribus continuit paucis admodum castellis in ulteriora promotis."

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus, who entered public life thirty years later, says of him (*Agric.* 14.): "Is ad nostram usque memoriam fidissimus mansit."

attitude of the Conquering Colony there established. Already, perhaps, Londinium, though distinguished by no such honourable title, excelled it as a place of commercial resort. The broad estuary of the Thames, confronting the waters of the Scheldt and Maas, was well placed for the exchange of British against Gaulish and German products; and the hill on which the city stood, facing the southern sun, and adapted for defence, occupies precisely the spot where first the river can be crossed conveniently. Swept east and west by the tidal stream, and traversed north and south by the continuous British roads, Londinium supplied the whole island with the luxuries of another zone, just as Massilia had supplied Gaul.<sup>1</sup> Hither led the ways which penetrated Britain from the ports in the Channel, from Lymne, Richborough and Dover. From hence they diverged again to Camulodunum north-east, and to Verulamium north-west, where the chief lines of communication intersected one another. While the prefect, as governor-in-chief of the province, was occupied on the frontier in military operations, the finances were administered by a procurator; and whatever extortions he might countenance, so slight was the apprehension of any formidable resistance, that not only the towns, now frequented by thousands of Roman traders, were left unfortified, but the province itself was suffered to remain almost denuded of

Station of the  
presidiary le-  
gions.

soldiers. The legions now permanently quartered in Britain were still the four which have before been mentioned. Of these the Second, the

same which under the command of Vespasian had recently conquered the south-west, was now perhaps stationed in the forts on the Severn and Avon, or advanced to the encampment on the Usk, whence sprang the famous city of Caerleon, the camp of the Legion.<sup>2</sup> The Ninth was placed in guard

<sup>1</sup> Milton: "Me tenet urbs *reflua* quam Thamesis alluit unda;" not Reading or Windsor, but London, the only city on the tidal waters of the Thames.

<sup>2</sup> The Roman towns and villas, which have been discovered in such numbers along the course of the Severn and Avon, grew probably out of their system of defences against the long untamed brigandage of the western mountain-



over the Iceni, whose fidelity was not beyond suspicion. We may conjecture that its headquarters were planted as far north as the Wash, where it might dislocate any combinations these people should attempt to form with their unsteady neighbours the Brigantes. The Twentieth would be required to confront the Brigantes also on their western frontier, and to them we may assign the position on the Deva or Dee, from which the ancient city of Chester has derived its name, its site, and the foundations, at least, of its venerable fortifications.<sup>1</sup> There still remained another legion, the Fourteenth; but neither was this held in reserve in the interior of the province. The necessities of border warfare required its active operations among the Welsh mountains, which it penetrated step by step, and gradually worked its way towards the last asylum of the Druids in Mona, or

Anglesey. The Gaulish priesthood, proscribed in their own country, would naturally fly for

Retreat of the  
Druids into An-  
glesey.

refuge to Britain: proscribed in Britain, wherever the power of Rome extended, they retreated, inch by inch, and withdrew from the massive shrines which still attest their influence on our southern plains, to the sacred recesses of the little island, surrounded by boiling tides, and clothed with impenetrable thickets. In this gloomy lair, secure apparently, though shorn of might and dignity, they still persisted in the practice of their unholy superstition. They strove, perhaps, like the trembling priests of Mexico, to appease the gods, who seemed to avert their faces, with more horrid sacrifices than ever. Here they retained their assemblies, their schools, and their oracles; here was the asylum of the fugitives; here was the sacred grove, the abode of the awful Deity, which

sees. The Cæsars had their Welsh marches as well as the Plantagenets. Isca Silurum must have been an important post for the protection of the Roman ironworks in the Forest of Dean.

<sup>1</sup> The position of the headquarters of the Second legion at Isca Silurum (Caerleon), and of the Twentieth at Deva (Chester), is established from lapidary remains. These may be no doubt of a later period, but, as a general rule, these positions, after the first consolidation of the Roman power, were permanent.

in the stillest noon of night or day the priest himself scarce ventured to enter, lest he should rush unwitting into the presence of its Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Didius had been satisfied with retaining the Roman acquisitions, and had made no attempt to extend them; and his successor, Veranius, had contented himself with some trifling incursions into the country of the Silures. The death of Veranius prevented, perhaps, more important operations. But he had exercised rigorous discipline in the camp, and Suetonius Paullinus, who next took the command, found the legions well equipped and well disposed, and their stations connected by military roads across the whole breadth of the island. The rumours of the city marked out this man as a rival to the gallant Corbulo, and great successes were expected from the measures which he would be prompt in adopting. Leaving the Second legion on the Usk to keep the Silures in check, and the Twentieth on the Dee to watch the Brigantes, he joined the quarters of the Fourteenth, now pushed as far as Segontium on the Menai straits.<sup>2</sup> He prepared a number of rafts or boats for the passage of the infantry; the stream at low water was, perhaps, nearly fordable for cavalry, and the trusty Batavians on his wings were accustomed to swim by their horses' sides clinging by the mane or bridle, across the waters, not less wide and rapid, of their native Rhine. Still the traject must have been perilous enough, even if unopposed. But now the further bank was thronged with the Britons in dense array, while between their ranks, the women, clad in black and with hair dishevelled, rushed like furies with flaming torches, and behind them were seen the Druids raising their hands to heaven, in-

<sup>1</sup> Lucan iii. 423,—

“Medio cum Phœbus in axe est,  
Aut cœlum nox atra tenet, pavet ipse sacerdos  
Accessus, dominumque timet deprendere luci.”

<sup>2</sup> Segontium is the modern Caernarvon. There is every appearance of great changes having taken place in the line of coast in this neighbourhood.

Suetonius Paul-  
linus routs the  
Britons in Au-  
glesey.

A. D. 61.  
A. U. 814.



voking curses on the daring invaders. The Romans were so dismayed at the sight that, as they came to land, they at first stood motionless to be struck down by every assailant. But this panic lasted but for a moment. Recalled by the cries of their chiefs to a sense of discipline, of duty, of danger, they closed their ranks, advanced their standards, struck, broke and trampled on the foe before them, and applied his own torches to his machines and waggons. The rout was complete; the fugitives, flung back by the sea, had no further place of retreat. The island was seamed with Roman entrenchments, the groves cut down or burnt, and every trace speedily abolished of the foul rites by which Hesus had been propitiated, or the will of Taranus consulted.<sup>1</sup>

From this moment the Druids disappear from the page of history; they were exterminated, we may believe, upon their own altars; for Suetonius took no half measures. But whatever were his further designs for the final pacification of the province, they were interrupted by the sudden outbreak of a revolt in his rear. The Iceni, as has been said, had submitted, after their great overthrow, to the yoke of the invaders: their king Prasutagus had been allowed indeed to retain his nominal sovereignty; but he was placed under the control of Roman officials; his people were required to contribute to the Roman treasury: their communities were incited to a profuse expenditure which exceeded their resources; while the exactions imposed on them were so heavy that they were compelled to borrow largely, and entangle themselves in the meshes of the Roman money-lenders. The great capitalists of the city, wealthy courtiers, and prosperous freedmen, advanced the sums they called for at exorbitant interest; from year to year they found themselves less able to meet their obligations, and mortgaged property and person to their unrelenting creditors. Among the immediate causes of the insurrection which followed, is mentioned the sudden calling in by Seneca, the richest of

Discontent of  
the Iceni.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 30.

philosophers, of the large investments he had made, which he seemed in danger of losing altogether.<sup>1</sup>

But the oppression of the Romans was not confined to these transactions. Prasutagus, in the hope of propitiating the provincial government to his family, had bequeathed his dominions to the republic. He expected perhaps that his wife and his children, who were also females, if not allowed to exercise even a nominal sovereignty after him, would at least be treated in consequence with the respect due to their rank, and secured in the enjoyment of ample means and consideration. This was the fairest lot that remained to the families of the dependent chieftains, and the Romans had not often grudged it them. But an insolent official, placed in charge of these new acquisitions after the death of Prasutagus, forgot what was due to the birth and even the sex of the wretched princesses. He suspected them, perhaps, of secreting a portion of their patrimony, and did not scruple to employ stripes to recover it from the mother, while he surrendered her tender children to even worse indignities. Boadicea, the widowed queen of the Iceni, was a woman of masculine spirit. Far from succumbing under the cruelty of her tyrants and hiding the shame of her family, she went forth into the public places, showed the scars of her wounds, and the fainting forms of her abused daughters, and adjured her people to a desperate revenge. The Iceni were stung to frenzy at their sovereign's wrongs, at their own humiliation. The danger, the madness, of the attempt was considered by none for a moment. They rose as one man: there was no power at hand to control them: the Roman officials fled, or, if arrested, were slaughtered; and a vast multitude, armed and unarmed, rolled southward to overwhelm and extirpate the intruders. To the Colne, to the Thames, to the sea, the country lay entirely open. The legions were all removed to a distance, the towns were unenclosed, the Roman traders settled in them were untrained

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lxii. 2. Dion is ill-natured; yet I do not think he can have invented this story; and Brutus had done the like.

to arms. Even the Claudian colony was undefended. The procurator, Catus Decianus, was at the moment absent, and being pressed for succour, could send no more than two hundred soldiers for its protection. Little reliance could be placed on the strength of a few worn-out veterans: the natives, however specious their assurances, were not unjustly distrusted, for they too, like the Iceni, had suffered insolence and ill-treatment. The great temple of Claudius was a standing monument of their humiliation: for its foundation their estates had been confiscated, for its support their tribute was required, and they regarded as victims or traitors the native chiefs who had been enrolled in its service. Whatever alarm they might feel at the indiscriminate fury of the hordes descending upon them, they smiled grimly at the panic which more justly seized the Romans. The guilty objects of national vengeance discovered the direst prodigies in every event around them. The wailings of their women, the neighing of their horses, were interpreted as evil omens. Their theatre was said to have resounded with uncouth noises; the buildings of the colony had been seen inversely reflected in the waters of their estuary; and at ebb-tide ghastly remains of human bodies had been discovered in the ooze.<sup>1</sup> Above all, the statue of Victory, planted to face the enemies of the republic, had turned its back to the advancing barbarians and fallen prostrate before them. When the colonists proposed to throw up hasty entrenchments they were dissuaded from the work, or impeded in it by the natives, who persisted in declaring that there was no cause for fear; it was not till the Iceni were actually in sight, and the treachery of the Trinobantes no longer doubtful, that they retreated tumultuously within the precincts of the temple, and strengthened its slender defences to support a sudden attack till succour could arrive.

Surprise and  
capture of Cam-  
ulodunum.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 32.: "Visam speciem in æstuario Tamesæ subversæ coloniæ." The "estuary of the Thames" may comprise the whole extent of the deep indentation of the coast between Landguard Point and the North Foreland.



But the impetuosity of the assault overcame all resistance. The stronghold was stormed on the second day, and all who had sought refuge in it, armed and unarmed, given up to slaughter.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the report of this fearful movement had travelled far and wide through the country. It reached Petilius

Cerialis, the commander of the Ninth legion, which I suppose to have been stationed near the Wash, and he broke up promptly from his camp

to hang on the rear of the insurgents. It reached the Twentieth legion at Deva, which awaited the orders of Suetonius himself, as soon as he should learn on the banks of the Menai the perils in which the province was involved. The prefect withdrew the Fourteenth legion from the smoking groves of Mona, and urged it with redoubled speed along the highway of Watling Street, picking up the best troops from the Twentieth as he rushed by, and summoning the Second from Isca to join him in the South. But Pænius Postumus, who commanded this latter division, neglected to obey his orders, and crouched in terror behind his fortifications. The Iceni turned boldly on Cerialis, who was hanging close upon their heels, and routed his wearied battalions with great slaughter. The infantry of the Ninth legion was cut in pieces, and the cavalry alone escaped to their entrenchments.<sup>1</sup> But the barbarians had not skill nor patience to conduct the siege of a Roman camp. They left the squadron of Cerialis unmolested, nor did they attempt to force the seat-

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 31, 32.; *Agric.* 16.: "Nec ullum in barbaris sævitæ genus omisit ira et victoria." The atrocities inflicted on the captives are described in horrid detail by Dion, lxi. 1-7.; τὰς γὰρ γυναῖκας τὰς εὐγενεστάτας καὶ εὐπρεπεστάτας γυμνὰς ἐκρέμασαν, καὶ τοὺς τε μαστοὺς αὐτῶν περιέτεμον, καὶ τοὺς στόμασι σφῶν προσέρραπτον, ὅπως ὥς καὶ ἐσθίουσαι αὐτοὺς ὀρεῖντο· καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο πασσάλους ὀξέσι διὰ παντὸς τοῦ σώματος κατὰ μῆκος ἀνέπειραν. In the immediate neighbourhood of Colchester a skeleton is said to have been found which, from the implements lying by it, seems to have been that of a Roman priest, buried head downwards: καὶ ταῦτα πάντα, says Dion, ἰερίζοντες.

<sup>1</sup> The site of this battle has been assigned, with some probability, from the great tumulus at that spot, to Wormingford, six miles north of Colchester.



tered posts around them. After giving Camulodunum to the flames, they dispersed throughout the country, plundering and destroying. Suetonius, unappalled by the frightful accounts which thronged upon him, held on his course steadfastly with his single legion, broke through the scattered bands of the enemy, and reached Londinium without a check.<sup>1</sup> This place was crowded with Roman residents, crowded still more at this moment with fugitives from the country towns and villas: but it was undefended by walls, its population of traders was of little account in military eyes, and Suetonius sternly determined to leave it, with all the wealth it harboured, to the barbarians, rather than sacrifice his soldiers in the attempt to save it.<sup>2</sup> The policy of the Roman commander was to secure his communications with Gaul: but he was resolved not to abandon the country, nor surrender the detachments hemmed in at various points by the general rising of the Britons. The precise direction of his movements we can only conjecture. Had he retired to the southern bank of the Thames, he would probably have defended the passage of that river; or had the Britons crossed it unresisted, the historians would not have failed to specify so important a success. But the situation of Camulodunum, inclosed in its old British lines, and backed by the sea, would offer him a secure retreat where he might defy attack, and await reinforcements; and the insurgents, after their recent triumphs, had abandoned their first conquests to wreak their fury on other seats of Roman civilization. While, therefore, the Iceni sacked and burnt first Verulamium, and next Londinium, Suetonius made, as I conceive, a flank march towards Camulodunum, and kept ahead of their pursuit, till he could choose his own position to await their attack. In a valley between undulating hills, with woods in the rear, and

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 33.: "At Suetonius mira constantia medios inter hostes Londinium perrexit."

<sup>2</sup> "Unius oppidi damno servare universa statuit." Our early antiquarians could trace the remains of a Roman encampment at Islington, which they supposed to have been the quarters of Suetonius at this moment.

the ramparts of the British oppidum not far perhaps on his right, he had every advantage for marshalling his slender forces; and these were increased in number more than in strength by the fugitives capable of bearing arms, whom he allowed to cling to his fortunes.<sup>1</sup> Ten thousand resolute men drew their swords for the Roman Empire in Britain. The natives, many times their number, spread far and wide over the plain; but they could assail the narrow front of the Romans with only few battalions at once, and the waggons, which conveyed their accumulated booty and bore their wives and children, thronged the rear, and cut off almost the possibility of retreat.

But flushed with victory, impatient for the slaughter, animated with desperate resolution to die or conquer, the Britons cast no look or thought behind them.

Defeat of the  
Icenî.

Boadicea drove her car from rank to rank, from nation to nation, with her daughters beside her, attesting the outrage she had endured, the vengeance she had already taken, proclaiming the gallant deeds of the queens before her, under whom British warriors had so often triumphed, denouncing the intolerable yoke of Roman insolence, and declaring that whatever the men might determine, the women would now be free or perish. The harangue of Suetonius, on the other hand, was blunt and sarcastic. He told his men not to mind the multitudes before them, nor the noise they made: there were more women among them than men: as for their own numbers, let them remember that in all battles a few good swordsmen really did the work; the half-armed and dastard crowds would break and fly when they felt again the prowess of the Roman veterans. Thus encouraged, the legionaries could with difficulty be restrained to await the

<sup>1</sup> Tac. l. i. c.: "Comitantes in partem agminis acceperat." I am indebted to the Rev. Mr. Jenkins, of Stanway, near Colchester, for this conjecture with regard to the direction of the march, and the site of the battle. His views are explained in a tract in the *Archæologia*, 1842; and I may refer the reader to some further remarks upon them in the *Quarterly Review*, vol. xcvii. His speculations, I may add, have been of the highest value to me, though I must be content sometimes to follow them "non passibus æquis."

onset; and as soon as the assailants had exhausted their missiles, bore down upon them in the wedge-shaped column, which had so often broken Greeks, Gauls and Carthaginians. The auxiliaries followed with no less impetuosity. The horsemen, lance in hand, pierced the ranks which still kept their ground. But a single charge was enough. The Britons were in a moment shattered and routed. In another moment, the Romans had reached the wide circumvallation of waggons, among which the fugitives were scrambling in dismay, slew the cattle and the women without remorse, and traced with a line of corpses and carcases the limits of the British position. We may believe that the massacre was enormous. The Romans declared that 80,000 of their enemies perished, while of their own force they lost only 400 slain, and about as many wounded. Boadicea put an end to her life by poison: we could have wished to hear that the brave barbarian had fallen on a Roman pike. Suetonius had won the greatest victory of the imperial history; to complete his triumph, the coward, Postumus, who had shrunk from aiding him, threw himself, in shame and mortification, on his own sword.<sup>1</sup>

By this utter defeat the British insurrection was paralyzed. Throughout the remainder of the season the Romans kept the field; they received reinforcements from the German camps, and their scattered cohorts were gradually brought together in a force which overawed all resistance. The revolted districts were chastised with fire and sword, and the systematic devastation inflicted upon them, suffering as they already were from the neglect of tillage during the brief intoxication of their success, produced a famine which swept off the seeds of future insurrections. On both sides a fearful amount of de-

Final suppression of the insurrection.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 34-37.; *Agric.* 16. Dion, lxii. 12. From the slender accounts we have received of this outbreak it would seem to have been confined to the Iceni, which makes it the more probable that these people were a different race from the Celtic Britons. Their numbers as indicated by Dion, and even by Tacitus, deserve little reliance.



struction had been committed. Amidst the overthrow of the great cities of southern Britain, not less than seventy thousand Roman colonists had perished. The work of twenty years was in a moment undone. Far and wide every vestige of Roman civilization was trodden into the soil. At this day the workmen who dig through the foundations of the Norman and the Saxon London, strike beneath them on the traces of a double Roman city, between which lies a mass of charred and broken rubbish, attesting the conflagration of the terrible Boadicea.

The temper of Suetonius, as may be supposed from what has been already said of him, was stern and unbending, even beyond the ordinary type of his nation. No other officer, perhaps, in the Roman armies could have so turned disaster into victory, and recovered a province at a blow; but it was not in his character to soothe the conquered, to conciliate angry passions, to restore the charm of moral superiority. Classicianus, who was his next procurator, complained of him to the emperor, as wishing to protract hostilities when every end might be obtained by conciliation. A freedman of the court, named Polyeletus, was sent on the delicate mission, to judge between the civil and the military chief, and to take the measures most fitting for securing peace and obedience. Polyeletus brought with him a large force from Italy and Gaul, and was no less surprised perhaps than the legions he commanded, to see himself at the head of a Roman army. Even the barbarians, we are told, derided the victorious warriors who bowed in submission to the orders of a bondman. But Polyeletus could make himself obeyed at least, if not respected. The loss of a few vessels on the coast furnished him with a pretext for removing Suetonius from his command, and transferring it to a consular, Petronius Turpilianus, whose temper and policy inclined equally to peace.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, as an admirer of Trajan, can never forego a gibe at captains who preferred the conquests of peace to those of warfare. Of this Turpilianus he says: "Is non irritato hoste, neque laecessitus, honestum pacis nomen segni otio imposuit."—*Ann.* xiv. 39.



From the lenity of this proprætor the happiest consequences evidently ensued. The southern Britons acquiesced in the dominion of Rome, while the northern were awed into deference to her superior influence. Her manners, her arts, her commerce, penetrated far into regions yet unconquered by the sword. Her establishments at Londinium, Verulamium, and Camulodunum rose again from their ashes. Never was the peaceful enterprise of her citizens more vigorous and elastic than at this period. The luxuries of Italy and the provinces, rapidly increasing, required the extension to the utmost of all her resources. Manufactures and commerce were pushed forward with unexampled activity. The products of Britain, rude as they were, consisting of raw materials chiefly, were demanded with an insatiable appetite by the cities of Gaul and Germany, and exchanged for arts and letters, which at least decked her servitude with silken fetters. The best of the Roman commanders,—and there were some, we may believe, among them both thoughtful and humane,—while they acknowledged they had no right to conquer, yet believed that their conquests were a blessing. The best of the native chiefs,—and some too of them may have wished for the real happiness of their countrymen,—acknowledged, perhaps, that while freedom is the noblest instrument of virtue, it only degrades the vicious to the lowest depths of barbarism.

Happy effects  
of this policy,  
and rapid pro-  
gress of civiliza-  
tion in Britain.

## CHAPTER LII.

THE FAMILY OF THE DOMITII.—EARLY YEARS OF NERO.—HIS EDUCATION UNDER SENECA.—STRUGGLE FOR INFLUENCE OVER HIM BETWEEN THE SENATE, HIS TUTOR, AND HIS MOTHER.—HE MAKES A FAVOURABLE IMPRESSION AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS REIGN.—HIS INTRIGUE WITH ACTE AND GRADUAL PROGRESS IN VICE.—BEHAVIOUR OF AGRIPPINA AND SENECA.—PRAISE OF HIS CLEMENCY.—DISGRACE OF PALLAS.—MURDER OF BRITANNICUS.—DIVISION BETWEEN NERO AND AGRIPPINA.—INTRIGUES AGAINST HER.—CONSECRATION OF A TEMPLE TO CLAUDIUS.—FAVOURABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF NERO'S EARLY GOVERNMENT.—HIS FINANCIAL AND LEGISLATIVE MEASURES.—THE "QUINQUENNium NERONIS." —A. D. 54-59. A. U. 807-812.

**A** PECULIAR interest attaches to the history of the Romans through the greater part of its course, from the precision with which we can trace the character of families, descending often with the same unmistakeable lineaments from father to son, for many generations. We mark the pride of the Claudii; the turbulence of the Lepidi; the cool selfishness of the Pompeii. There is no more striking analogy between Roman and English history than this: it is only an aristocracy that can present us with a family history of public interest. The great men of democratic Athens stand out alone: no one cares to ask who were their fathers, or whether they left any sons. Had they sprung every one from the earth, as they fancifully boasted of their nation, their career and character could not have been, to all appearance, more independent of family antecedents. So strongly, however, were the features of the Roman family traced by the hereditary training of its members, that though the descent of blood was often interrupted by the practice of adoption, the moral aspects of its

Family character of the Domitii, the ancestors of Nero.

character were still broadly but clearly preserved, and it becomes of little importance to ascertain, in each particular instance, whether the race was actually continued by natural succession, or interpolated by a legal fiction. The hereditary traditions of the Scipios were reflected faithfully in the legal representatives of their house, though some of the greatest of the name were not really connected by ties of affinity with one another. It was enough that the sentiment of connexion was preserved by the link of the domestic cult, and the common inheritance of the family honours. It had been remarked, however, of the patrician Claudii that numerous as their branches were, none of them down to the time of Tiberius Claudius the emperor, had ever been reduced to the necessity of perpetuating itself by adoption; and many others, no doubt, of the chief Roman houses had preserved their blood-descent equally unbroken.<sup>1</sup> Such unquestionably had been for many generations the boast of some, at least, of the Domitii. The stock from which the emperor Nero sprang may be traced back from son to father for about two hundred years. The Domitian gens was widely spread and illustrious in every branch. An Afer, a Marsus, a Celer, a Calvinus, had all obtained distinction in one or other of the various careers which courted the buoyant energy of the Roman aristocracy. But of these houses none was so full of honours as that of the Ahenobarbi, the progenitors of the emperor Nero. It was illustrious for the high public part it played through several generations; illustrious for its wealth and consideration, for its native vigour and ability, but execrable at the same time above every other for the combination of ferocity and faithlessness by which its representatives were successively distinguished. The founder of the race, according to Suetonius, was a Lucius Domitius, to whom the Dioscuri announced the victory of Regillus, changing his beard from black to red in token of the divine

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xii. 25. "Adnotabant periti nullam antehac adoptionem inter patricios Claudios reperiri, eosque ab Atto Clauso continuos duravisse." Comp. Suet. *Claud.* 39.

manifestation. Thenceforth the name of Ahenobarbi, the Red or Brazen beards, was common to the family, and they inherited, it was piously believed, the complexion as regularly as the name. Time went on, and the Red-beards enjoyed seven consulships: one of them filled the office of censor: the house was raised from the Plebs to the Patriciate. From Cnæus Domitius Ahenobarbus, consul in 632, the conqueror of the Allobroges, we have the descent complete. The son of this victorious imperator was chief pontiff and censor in 662; his temper was violent and his public conduct austere. *No wonder*, said of him the refined and graceful Crassus, *that his beard is of brass, for his mouth is of iron and his heart of lead.* The grandson was consul in 667, and being joined in marriage to a daughter of Cinna, took the side of the Marians in the first civil wars. The great grandson, Lucius, has been signalized in these pages as an upholder of the Optimates against Cæsar, the son-in-law and representative of Cinna, and therefore against his own father's friends. He perished after a career of furious partizanship, disgraced with cruelty and treachery, on the field of Pharsalia. The fifth in descent, a Cnæus, for the prænomen generally alternated, was the follower of Brutus and Cassius, sided afterwards with their foe Antonius, and finally deserted his falling fortunes for the luckier star of Octavius.<sup>1</sup> The sixth was Lucius Domitius, who crossed the Elbe with a Roman army, a man to be noted in the military annals of his country, but whose temper was as savage as his grandfather's, and his tastes so sanguinary that Augustus was compelled to check the bloodshed of his gladiatorial shows. The son of Lucius, the seventh in direct succession, was infamous for crimes of every kind; for murder and treason, for adultery and incest. He was mean as well as cruel, and even stooped to enrich himself by petty pilfering. Towards the end of Tiberius's reign he was subjected to a charge of Majesty, and would have perished, but for the opportune

<sup>1</sup> Yet this Domitius, according to Suetonius, was "by far the best" of his race. Suet. *Ner.* 2.



demise of the emperor. Married to Agrippina, the sister of Caius Caligula, he became the father of Lucius Domitius, afterwards Nero. He made a jest of his own enormities; and it was reported at least, that on the child's birth he replied to the felicitations of his friends by grimly remarking, that nothing could spring from such a father and such a mother but what should be abominable and fatal to the state.<sup>1</sup>

The commencement of the future emperor's career was clouded with perils and disasters. At the age of three years he lost his father's protection, and Caius, to whom, by way of precaution, two thirds of his Misfortunes of Nero's early years. patrimony had been bequeathed, shamelessly grasped the remainder also. The child thus despoiled, and rendered doubly an orphan by the exile of his mother, was left to the care of his father's sister, Domitia Lepida. By this selfish intriguer, the mother of Messalina, he seems to have been little cared for; his first tutors were a dancer and a barber; nevertheless his aunt appears to have considered, at least at a later period, that she had something of a mother's claims upon him. Claudius, however, kindly restored him his inheritance, together with the fortune of Crispus Passienus, who had been Agrippina's first husband, and was afterwards apparently united to another of his aunts, named also Domitia.<sup>2</sup> The favour of this emperor,

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 5, 6.; Dion, lxi. 2. This writer's history, in the shape in which we possess it, from book lv. to lx. is probably only an abridgment, the author of which is unknown. From book lxi. we have only the epitome of Xiphilinus, which is still more meagre than the preceding, nor does it seem to be always faithful. It is often quoted under the name of the abbreviator. I have thought it, however, more convenient to preserve that of the original author.

<sup>2</sup> Care must be taken not to confound the two aunts of Nero, Domitia Lepida, usually known by her second name only, and Domitia. The first was wife to Valerius Messala, mother of Messalina, a rival of Agrippina, who got her put to death by Claudius: Tac. *Ann.* xii. 65. The other was second wife to Passienus, and though also an object of jealousy to Agrippina, survived her, and was supposed to have been eventually poisoned by Nero. Suet. *Ner.* 34.; Dion, lxi. 17.

if we may believe the rumours of the day, gained the child at an early period the jealousy of Messalina; and he narrowly escaped being smothered by her emissaries in the security of his midday slumber.

From this epoch his fortunes have already been traced to the moment of his accession. The position of the young

His education.

Domitius, as the son of a noble of the highest

class, closely allied with the reigning family, yet not directly in the line of succession, was peculiarly favourable to his education. The loss of his fierce and brutal father, when he was but three years old, was certainly no matter of regret. The superintendence of his early training would thus fall exclusively to his mother, interrupted only by the two years of her exile; and Agrippina seems, with all her faults, to have had at least a princely sense of the duty which thus devolved upon her. The child was docile and affectionate, apt to learn and eager for praise. His mother sought to imbue his mind with the best learning of the times, and at the same time to impart brilliancy and fascination to his manners. It was the fashion to complain of the decline of education at this period in the Roman world. Surrounded by vice and grossness of all kinds, and conscious of their degeneracy in virtue as well as their neglect of decorum, it was in the corrupt training of childhood that moralists seemed to discover the germ of the evils they deplored. But, as usual with reactionists in social life, who from imperfect experience and sympathies see the defects only of the present, and the good only of the past, they mistook the cause of the disease, and wasted their energies in declamations against an imag-

Complaints of  
the state of pa-  
trician educa-  
tion.

inary evil. It was the complaint of the day, that

children were no longer educated by their own

mothers, but consigned in their tenderest years

to the mercenary supervision, first of handmaids, and soon afterwards of pedagogues. Such, it was said, had not been the practice of Aurelia, the mother of Julius Cæsar; of Atia, the parent of Octavius; of Cornelia, from whom her sons, the Gracchi, distinguished for their eloquence, had imbibed the

rudiments of the Roman tongue.<sup>1</sup> Yet, according to the ancient usage, the child had always been removed from the women's chamber at seven years; and it cannot be pretended that the training of the first seven years of life could have laid deep the foundations either of the moral or the intellectual character. Indeed even the women, thus specially mentioned, were exceptions to the mass of the untutored matrons of Rome. Many mothers never taught their children anything up to the age of seven, and it was not unusual, nor undefended by some on principle, to leave them to learn even the rudiments of reading from the pedagogue after that epoch was passed.<sup>2</sup> This complaint, then, which is particularly advanced in the juvenile work of Tacitus (for as his, I think, the *Treatise on Orators* should be recognised), was, in fact, unfounded. The real quarrel, however, of the conservatives to whom he belonged, was with the practice, introduced in the last age of the republic, of sending children to public schools, instead of keeping them under tutors at home. Domestic tuition, the necessity of an early stage of society, seemed more dignified and aristocratic; it savoured of the idea that letters were a craft and mystery; that the learning of the noble was a privilege, not to be freely communicated to all classes; and on this account, unconsciously perhaps, it found patrons among the patriots of the imperial era, the upholders of every republican prejudice. It was easy then, as now, to point out the superficial evils of public education, the conceit and ostentation it may foster; but the patrician clung with peculiar tenacity to his cherished isolation and reserve, the qualities which, in his view, most proudly distinguished the high-born Roman from the Greeks, the Orientals, and the vulgar all over the world. Whatever tended to place the young noble on an equality with other men, to imbue him with liberal feelings, to break down the pride of caste and the traditions of antique usage, among which he had been born, was regarded by the purists of the empire

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *de Orator.* 28, 29.

<sup>2</sup> See Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* i. 1., who, however, objects to the practice.



with suspicion and dislike. A society which had no other safeguard but blind habit, might naturally be alarmed at anything which tended to innovation; but a few only of the most thoughtful of the nation perceived the downward progress of society around them; and even they too often mistook or misrepresented its causes.

Augustus, it is curious to remark, discovered means, in his usual spirit of compromise, of reconciling both the conflicting systems of education which he found in action. In his day, a certain Verrius Flaccus was a noted preceptor, and kept a school much resorted to by the young nobility. The emperor invited this teacher to undertake the education of his grandsons; but for this purpose he required him to remove his benches into the palace itself, and limit the number of his pupils.<sup>1</sup> This, indeed, was probably a solitary attempt to give to the children of the ruling family the stimulus of competition in a class. For them, with this exception, the old haughty fashion of solitary teaching was, as far as we can learn, still maintained. The children of Drusus and Germanicus seem to have been instructed in the pomp of antique exclusiveness, under the eye of pedagogues at home; and such was apparently the case with the young Domitius also.

Tiberius had betrayed a base jealousy of his grandchild Caius; but Claudius, still following the example of his illustrious ancestor, had shown no disposition to restrict the education of the son of Agrippina. It was the complaint of the day, that at a more advanced stage, everything was sacrificed to the study of rhetoric; and that the science of moral philosophy, which, in better times, had been conjoined with more practical training, was now entirely abandoned, as producing no immediate and tangible results. The most eloquent teachers deserted the less fashionable branch of instruction, and the *care of morals* fell into the hand of a lower class of teachers.<sup>2</sup>

Augustus compromises between public and private education.

Principles of education adopted by Seneca for his pupil Nero.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *De Illustr. Gramm.* 17.

<sup>2</sup> See Quintil. l. c.: "Nam ut lingua primum cœpit esse in quæstu, institu-



Yet it may be doubted whether this complaint was generally well founded; it is allowed, at least, that a reaction speedily followed, and professors of philosophy were soon found to teach the old course of ethieal speculation, who rejected as frivolous the charms of oratory formerly used to embellish it.<sup>1</sup> But neither the one fault nor the other could be imputed to the master who was chosen, as we have seen, to form the mind and unfold the abilities of the young Domitius. L. Annæus Seneca, the son of the rhetorician Marcus, presents us with our completest specimen of the professed philosopher of antiquity. He was neither a statesman who indulged in moral speculation, like Cicero, nor a private citizen who detached himself, like Epicurus or Zeno, from the ordinary duties of life, to devote himself to the pursuit of abstract truth. To teach and preach philosophy in writing, in talking, in his daily life and conversation, was, indeed, the main object he professed; but he regarded all public careers as practical developments of moral science, and plumed himself on showing that thought may, in every case, be combined with action. His father, Marcus, in the course of a long life of successful teaching, may possibly have amassed a fortune; and his brother was adopted by a brilliant, and perhaps a wealthy declaimer. It is not unlikely, therefore, that Seneca inherited a good patrimony: nevertheless he must have found means of improving it very early, if the story be true, that the emperor Caius had marked him for death on account of his possessions. He continued, no doubt, to make the most of the favour of the great and powerful. If, in his precepts, he inculcates, with the Stoics, indifference to worldly advantages, the spirit he illustrated in his life was that of an earnest man of business. If he shrank from the profession of arms, and if even his eloquence was confined to speculative discussions, he played the true Roman in the art of making

*tumque eloquentiæ donis male uti, curam morum qui disertis habebantur reliquerunt. Ea vero destituta infirmioribus ingeniis velut prædæ fuit."*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*: "Contempto dicendi labore, partem tamen potiorem, si dividi posset, retinuerunt."

money beget money. At a time when the philosophers fell too generally into the error of dissuading men from the toils and perils of a public career, it was well that Seneca's precepts were not too strictly enforced by his own practice. His instructions were, on the whole, the best perhaps that could at that time have been imparted to a royal pupil. Both in sentiment and action, Seneca, with all his faults, rose no doubt far above the ordinary pedagogues of the day, the cringing slave, or the flattering freedman, to whom the young patricians were, for the most part, consigned. Doubtless, it was Seneca's principle of education to allure, possibly to coax, rather than drive, his pupil into virtue. He yielded on many points in order to borrow influence on others. He deigned to purchase the youth's attention to severer studies, by indulging his inclination to some less worthy amusements. To teach Nero eloquence and philosophy, it might be necessary to connive at his relaxations in singing, piping, and dancing. These were the recreations to which he most earnestly devoted himself, in which he believed himself to excel, and in which he acquired a tolerable proficiency: to make sonorous verses was not beyond his ability; but when he harangued, his tutor, we have seen, was obliged to compose his orations for him. Yet we might possibly find, were the truth known, that his abler predecessors had not trusted, in their first juvenile efforts, entirely to their own abilities. The attainments just mentioned would, no doubt, be frivolous in any man in princely station; and, it must be added, that in a Roman noble they were worse than frivolous, branded as they were by public opinion, the opinion at least of the best men, as culpable. Nevertheless, it was something to occupy the mind of a ruler of millions with any taste that was harmless and bloodless. Even the morose old Romans did not deny that music and singing were humanizing arts; they rather protested against humanity being made an object of instruction at all to the lords and conquerors of mankind.

In the midst however of creatures and sycophants, and

the vilest instruments of his elders' pleasures, the young noble could not fail to be affected by the most fatal influences.<sup>1</sup> From childhood he was steeped in enervating indulgences: the softness with which he was habitually treated, the delicacies with which he was pampered, relaxed the nerves both of his mind and body.<sup>2</sup> Clothed in purple and the gaudiest trappings, he was imbued with the vice of personal ostentation, and led step by step to the most inordinate desires.<sup>3</sup> The growing youth reclined indolently on beds of down.<sup>4</sup> His palate, in the phrase of Quintilian, was educated before his lips and tongue: the sensual tastes were cultivated before the moral.<sup>5</sup> The kitchen was more frequented than the lecture room.<sup>6</sup> Impertinence and immodesty were encouraged, the one by applause, the other by example.<sup>7</sup> The child soon followed his father to the theatres and the circus, the schools of all that was exciting to the worst passions; and, under the stimulus thus prematurely given, learnt to be a man before he had experienced the preparatory training of boyhood.<sup>8</sup>

Vicious moral training of the young nobles.

The feelings with which the youthful heir to the purple may generally be supposed to have entered on his succession, are picturesquely described by the poet Statius. *The child of the Persian Achæmenes balances, in joy and fear, the pleasures and the risks of sovereignty: Will his nobles continue faithful?*

Perils which surrounded the young emperor.

A. D. 54.  
A. U. 807.

<sup>1</sup> Quintil. i. 2.: "Nostros amicos, nostros concubinos vident; omne convivium obscenæ cantilenæ strepit; pudenda dietu spectantur. Fit ex his consuetudo, deinde natura."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.: "Infantiam statim deliciis solvimus. Mollis illa educatio, quam indulgentiam vocamus, nervos omnes et mentis et corporis frangit."

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.: "Quid non adultus concupiscet qui in purpuris repit?"

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.: "In lecticis crescent."

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.: "Ante palatum eorum quam os instituimus."

<sup>6</sup> Senec. *Ep.* 95.: "In rhetorum et philosophorum scholis solitudo est; et quam celebres culinæ sunt; quanta circa nepotum focos juvenitus strepit!"

<sup>7</sup> Senec. *Const. Sap.* 41, 12.: Tac. *de Orat.* 29.: "Per quæ paulatim impudentia irrepsit et sui alienique contemptus."

<sup>8</sup> Tac. l. c.: "Histrionalis furor et gladiatorum equorumque studia, quibus occupatus et obsessus animus quantum loci bonis artibus relinquit?"



*will his people obey the rein? to whom shall he entrust the marches of the Euphrates? who shall keep for him the Caspian gates? He shrinks from the mighty bow of his father, and scarce dares to press his charger: the sceptre seems too heavy for his grasp; his brows have not yet grown to the compass of the tiara.*<sup>1</sup> Such was the constant condition of Oriental sovereignty; nor need the description be materially modified to suit the inheritance of the Cæsars. While conspiracies were rife against the reigning emperor, the presumptive heir was generally regarded with hope and affection. But his accession might at once direct every evil passion against himself; the senators might forget their oaths, the commons murmur at authority; and the chiefs of the legions on every frontier might corrupt the temper of the soldiers. If the genius of Nero's next predecessor was not fitted to dismay him by the grandeur of its proportions, he would still remember that he was the heir of Augustus and Julius, that he had succeeded to all their power, with none of their experience, and but little of their abilities. But it was within the palace, and amongst the members of his own family, that his perils chiefly lay. Those who were nearest to him might be the nearest objects of his distrust and apprehension. Agrippina and Britannicus were more formidable to him than Suetonius or Corbulo. His best counsellors early warned him against the dangerous encroachments of the first; of the second he learned to be jealous at least from the day of his accession. When Nero walked across the court of the palace leaning on the arm of Burrhus, to show himself to the prætorians, and solicit their support,

<sup>1</sup> Stat. *Theb.* viii. 286. :

“Sicut Achæmenius solium gentesque paternas  
 Excepit si forte puer, cui vivere patrem  
 Tutius, incerta formidine gaudia librat,  
 An fidi proceres, ne pugnet vulgus habenis;  
 Cui latus Euphratis, cui Caspia limina mandet:  
 Sumere tunc arcus ipsumque onerare veretur  
 Patris equum; visusque sibi nec sceptrâ capaci  
 Sustentare manu, nec adhuc implere tiaram.”



his chief anxiety was to anticipate the claims of his half-brother. Though admitted himself by adoption into the reigning family, the sacred stock of the Claudii and the Julii, and thus become in a legal sense the eldest scion and legitimate heir of the Cæsarean house, he felt that a legal fiction could not extinguish the natural sense of right, and that still to the mass of the citizens Britannicus must appear the true representative of the father from whose loins he sprang. The stern self-repression of the Roman character, which had schooled itself to accept mere legal adoption as equivalent to blood-descent, had at length given way. Nature had reasserted her sway, and resented in thousands of bosoms the recognition of the child of Domitius as the eldest born of Claudius.<sup>1</sup>

Now however, more than ever, would the ribald stories against the wretched Messalina come into play. This was the moment when the sneers, retailed by a later generation, against the noble, *the highborn* Britannicus, would have their deepest significance.<sup>2</sup>

Struggle for influence over Nero: the senate, the tutor, the mother.

These were the insinuations which now supported the tottering principle of the law, and seemed to justify the resolve of the soldiers. When the prætorians, prepared perhaps by Burrhus, had taken the part of the pretender, every popular scruple was speedily repressed. Law and the sword had both declared on his side; natural affection or respect, alone arrayed against them, shrank from the unequal contest, or yielded to the representations speciously palmed upon it. It was not worth while to contend for the heritage of a youth whose real parentage was obscured by such suspicions. To the ruling class, at all events, the dogmas of the law presented a sufficient plea for acquiescence: the nobles

<sup>1</sup> In the time of Dion the superiority of natural over legal descent seems to have been generally acknowledged. That writer begins his account of Nero's reign by declaring that Britannicus, as the legitimate, ought to have succeeded in place of Nero, the adopted son (lxi. l.): ἐκ δὲ δὴ τοῦ νῦν, he adds, καὶ τῷ Νέρωνι διὰ τὴν ποίησιν ἐπέβαλλεν.

<sup>2</sup> Juvenal, vi. 124.: "Ostenditque tuum, generose Britannice, ventrem."

of Rome were little disposed to risk their heads for a sentiment of justice or compassion. As long as he governed with decent respect to the pretensions of his nobility, Nero might regard himself as secure against the open rivalry of Britannicus: should he ever raise the alarm of the senate, then indeed the scion of the genuine Claudian stock might furnish a name to inscribe on the banner of a new revolution. The senate, with the instinct of selfish cowardice, fancied itself strong in the weakness of its ruler's title. The prince's advisers anxious for their charge, anxious for themselves, anxious also, we may believe, for the good of the commonwealth, took advantage of this state of affairs to promote good government, to make it the interest of all classes to maintain him. But it was easier to conciliate the senate and the people than to secure the confidence of the prince himself; to maintain their ascendancy over him against every rival; to guide his ardent and susceptible feelings into safe channels; above all, to supplant the influence of his mother, and prevent her from extending to his maturer years the authority she had exerted over his infancy. The woman who had subverted Messalina, who had murdered Claudius, who had removed from her path every rival without compunction, was resolved no doubt to hold fast the power to which she had waded through so much blood. It was not for Nero that she had plunged into this sea of crimes; however she might disguise it to her own conscience, her ambition was for herself more than for her son. She had already played the Emperor before the legions in the camp: she would not now resign the part to the stripling who occupied the palace. With this view Agrippina now leagued herself with the freedmen of the court, especially with Pallas, whose immense wealth, whose craft and long acquaintance with the springs of government, seemed to make him a more useful ally than the pedantic philosopher, or the rude captain. Though all-powerful with Claudius, Pallas seems from an early period to have become distasteful to Nero, who had at least the merit of rising above the flatteries of slaves and freedmen. Docile as he was to

Burrhus and Seneca, and easily cowed by the arrogance of his mother, against Pallas alone he evinced spirit and independence. To Agrippina, indeed, he was still fondly devoted. The first act of his reign was to demand fresh honours and compliments for her, and his first watchword, *The best of mothers*, was inspired probably by genuine affection.<sup>1</sup> From the camp the prætorians bore him into the senate-house, demanding by signs if not by words that he should be accepted as chief of the state; and before evening all the honours of empire were heaped upon him, of which he declined alone the title of Father of his Country. Of the testament of Claudius no notice was taken; nor are we informed what its provisions really were. Had it declared Nero the heir, it would of course have been duly recited. The funeral oration of the deceased was spoken, as might be expected, by his successor in person; an oration which Seneca was believed to have composed for him, and which displayed more graces of style than could be anticipated from the stripling himself. The mention it made of the late emperor's birth, and the triumphs of his ancestors, was received with marked attention; for in these family records the Romans took a national pride. They listened with respect to the boast of his learning, and to the assertion, true and honourable as it was, that his reign had been sullied by no external calamity. But when the speaker passed, by a natural transition, to the praise of his wisdom and discretion, the multitude burst into laughter. They had been wont, in the exuberant licence of the forum, to make Claudius their butt, and this scornful humour they had so long been permitted to indulge, that they could not now lay it aside when a last act of tardy justice was demanded of them. At the same time more thoughtful men remarked that Nero was the first of their princes who had needed help in making a speech. It was a painful token of the degradation into which they had fallen. If Nero was but seventeen years of age, Cæsar declaimed in the forum at twelve, Augustus at nineteen.

Nero pronounces the funeral oration over Claudius.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 2.; Suet. *Ner.* 9.



Tiberius was a practised orator. Caius, the madman, could harangue the senate with grace and vigour; even Claudius could speak with elegance after due preparation. But Nero, they remarked with a sigh or a sneer, had been directed to other studies. Sculpture and painting, singing and driving, such were the arts on which his sensibility had been occupied; yet in the occasional composition of verses it was allowed that he had shown himself not deficient in the elements of polite learning.<sup>1</sup>

From the Campus the orator returned to the Senate-house, and expounded to his nobles the principles of government he had been taught to prescribe to himself. They were not offended by his placing the *authority of the senate* on the same footing with the *consent of the soldiers*; and he made a favourable impression by reminding them that his youth had been implicated in no civil or domestic discords; he had no injuries to avenge, no enmities to prosecute. He promised to reject the most odious instruments of preceding administrations; he would not affect, like Claudius, to be the judge of all affairs in person, a pretence which could only result in throwing power into the hands of irresponsible assessors. In his household no office should be put up to sale; between his family and his people he would always scrupulously distinguish. The senate should retain all its prescriptive functions. Italy and the domains of the Roman people should look to the tribunals for justice. For himself he would confine his care to the provinces over which he was set to wield the sword of military command. This speech filled the senators with hopes of a mild administration; they decreed, in their joy, that the harangue should be engraved on silver, and recited annually on the accession of the consuls.<sup>2</sup> At the same time their new ruler allowed them to act with some show of inde-

Favourable impression made by his first speech to the senate.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 3.: "Cælare, pingere, cantus aut regimen equorum exercere; et aliquando, carminibus pangendis, inesse sibi elementa doctrinæ ostendebat."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 4.; Suet. *Ner.* 10.; Dion, lxi. 3.



pendence. They hastened to profit by this brief respite to flout the system of delation from which they had so much suffered. With this view, apparently, they repealed the permission Claudius had given to accept fees and rewards for pleading causes.<sup>1</sup> And further, they relieved the quæstors designate from the burden of exhibiting gladiatorial shows, which the late emperor, in his zeal for the diversions of the populace, had laid upon them. But Agrippina pretended to complain, as though it were meant to *abolish the acts* of her husband; and she had influence enough with her son to make him convene the senators within the walls of the palace, where, though unable to control their proceedings, she could at least hear their deliberations from behind a curtain. Nor did she deign always to practise even this slight reserve. On one occasion, when an embassy from Armenia was awaiting audience, she prepared to seat herself beside the emperor; nor, dismayed though they were at this unprecedented arrogance, did the courtiers venture to interfere, till Seneca whispered to the prince to descend himself and, under pretence of filial duty, meet her at the foot of the throne.

Not the demeanour only, but the acts of Agrippina, might now justly cause alarm. From the day of her son's elevation she seemed resolved to play the empress.

She was borne in the same litter with him, or he walked by her side while she proudly rode aloft.<sup>2</sup>

Arrogant behaviour of Agrippina.

To mark the unity of place and purpose between herself and him, she caused coins to be stamped, on which the heads of both were conjoined.<sup>3</sup> She gave answers to ambassadors, and sent despatches to foreign courts.<sup>4</sup> She directed, without the emperor's privity, the murder of M. Silanus, proconsul of Asia. This man was accounted stupid and harm-

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 5.: "Ne quis ad causam orandam mercede aut donis emeretur." At a later period Nero seems to have restored the wiser provisions of Claudius. See Suet. *Ner.* 17.: "Ut litigatores pro patrociniis certam justamque mercedem darent."

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxi. 3.; Suet. *Ner.* 9.

<sup>3</sup> See Eckhel, *Doctr. Numm.* vi. 257.

<sup>4</sup> Dion, l. c

less; he had caused no apprehension to the most jealous rulers, and Caius Caligula had been used to call him in contempt the *golden sheep*. But Agrippina feared that even his sluggish temper might be roused to avenge the murder of his brother Lucius, whom she had put out of the way before, as a possible rival to her son. Marcus Silanus was now removed by poison, administered by her agents, with hardly an attempt at disguise.<sup>1</sup> But the news of this crime could not reach Rome for some months, and the destruction of Narcissus, whom meanwhile she drove to death by cruel treatment in prison, was not regarded generally with disfavour. The senate and people were not yet alarmed. Burrhus alone and Seneca were startled at this virtual assumption of the power of life and death, conceded only to the emperors as a state necessity, and now, it was hoped, for ever abandoned even by them. They opposed themselves to her plans of personal cruelty and vengeance, and exerted themselves in strict alliance, to undermine the influence she still possessed over her son. There was little indeed in common in the character of the two associates. Burrhus was noted for his military bluntness, his sense of discipline and decorum, while Seneca was a courtier in manners, and affected to combine the man of the world with the philosopher. But the necessities of their position bound them closely together, and we may allow that both were equally disposed to form their pupil's mind, as far as possible, to virtue. They agreed, however, that a youth of his temper and in his position could be but imperfectly trained; and they agreed in the slippery policy of winking at some forms of

Close alliance  
of Seneca and  
Burrhus  
against her.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 1. The mother of the two Silani was a daughter of Julia and Lucius Paulus (Suet. *Oct.* 64.), possibly Æmilia Lepida by name (Suet. *Claud.* 26.); their father was App. Junius Silanus, killed by Claudius (Suet. *Claud.* 29.); and L. Silanus, one of the brothers, had been betrothed to Octavia, the sister of Britannicus. This near connexion with the imperial family, and the popular mutterings that he would make a better successor to Claudius than the stripling Nero, moved the jealousy of Agrippina against him. See Tac. l. c. and Ritter's note.

vice, or even enticing him to them, in order to divert him from more pernicious foibles, or crimes of deeper dye.<sup>1</sup>

The readiest means of weaning the young man from his childish dependence on his mother was to occupy him with an amorous intrigue. Nero was already betrothed to his half-sister Octavia; but this victim of

Nero's intrigue  
with the freed-  
woman, Acte.

family policy was unable to attract his affections, which were still free for another engagement. The care of his tutors was directed only to guard him from the fascinations of noble matrons, and avert the scandal of illegitimate connexions; and apparently without attempting to recall him to a sense of duty to his spouse, they were well pleased to see him devote himself, with the ardour of a first illusion, to the charms of a Greek freedwoman named Acte. The confidants of this amour were two companions a little above his own age, Salvius Otho, and Claudius Senecio, of whom the first was of distinguished family, the second the son of a freedman of the court; but both were notorious profligates, whose influence with him his mother had already noticed, and tried in vain to avert. Their power seemed confirmed by their participation in this secret (for the bashful youth still hoped it was a secret), and Agrippina was alarmed and

Behaviour of  
Agrippina.

incensed. Instead of biding the effects of possession on a first childish passion, she proclaimed to all around her indignation and fear, execrating in the coarsest terms the *freedwoman who dared to be her rival, the handmaid who aspired to be her daughter-in-law*. This violence overshot its mark, and threw the frightened and irritated youth into the arms of Seneca, who contrived to cast a veil over the intrigue, by finding a pretended lover for the object of his devotion. The mother now saw her mistake. Changing her tactics, she began to bid against the tutor by still greater indulgences, offering her own bosom for the secret confidences of his passion, her own apartment for the gratification of his impatient, but still timid, desires. She deigned to apologize

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 2.: "Juvantes invicem, quo facilius lubricam principis ætatem, si virtutem aspernaretur, voluptatibus concessis retinerent."



for her undue severity, and opened freely to his generous profusion the stores of her private coffers, which were hardly inferior to his own. But Nero was not so deceived; his advisers would not suffer him to be deceived. Indeed, such was the temper of Agrippina, that she could not long persist in the pretence of submission and indulgence, and Nero was mortified at her openly spurning the presents he made her, saying that he had nothing to give which she had not herself given to him.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly the influence of Seneca and Burrhus continued to rise. The confederates were far more wary in their proceedings. Their plan, as has been said, was to govern Nero by yielding to him, and they justified to themselves their tolerance of his failings by the assurance that they should thus save him from vices more odious and more fatal. The errors of Nero assumed gradually a deeper dye; his passions blossomed in vice, and bore fruit in crime; yet the downward progress was not precipitate; it was susceptible of palliation and disguise; it lurked long among the secrets of the palace, or was whispered only within the precincts of the court. High as the great Stoic philosopher strained the principles of virtue in his sublimest exhortations, he often acknowledged, in descending to a lower level, that for his own part he aspired only to be not the worst among bad men. *To the student, he says, who professes his wish and hope to rise to a loftier grade of virtue, I would answer that this is my wish also, but I dare not hope it. I am pre-occupied with vices. All I require of myself is, not to be equal to the best, but only to be better than the bad.*<sup>2</sup> He preached, he owns, more rigidly than he practised. But such confessions must not be regarded as the simple outpouring of conscious infirmity. We cannot doubt, from the general context of the speaker's declamations, that they are meant to disguise a considerable amount of self-satisfaction; that Seneca, like many preachers of vir-

Nero's gradual progress in vice—disguised by his ministers.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 13.: "Dividere filium quæ cuncta ex ipsa haberet."

<sup>2</sup> Senec. *Epist.* 75., de *Vit. Beat.* 17.



tue and holiness, while he professed to sigh over his own weakness on some points, was convinced that in repudiating vices which were in truth less congenial to him, he was soaring far above the level of ordinary humanity. The morality he impressed upon Nero was such as this: *Be courteous and moderate ; shun cruelty and repine ; abstain from blood :—* there was no difficulty in this to a young and popular prince, flattered on all sides, and abounding in every means of enjoyment :—*Compensate yourself with the pleasures of youth without compunction ; amuse yourself but hurt no man.* It required no philosopher to give these lessons ; and it may be questioned whether the comparative innocence of the young man's early indulgences would have been exchanged for grosser enormities under more vulgar tuition.

So, too, the praise of clemency with Seneca resounds in Nero's ears in the first year of his power, might be received with little emotion by one who had not yet felt the tyrant's inducements to cruelty. He regarded himself with complacency in the glass which,

Seneca's praise  
of Nero's clemency.

as Seneca expresses it, was there set up to reflect him. Let him turn his eyes, says the philosopher, on the great mass of mankind, wicked, turbulent, ready at any moment to reduce the world to anarchy, could it only succeed in breaking the imperial yoke imposed on its evil passions. Let him reflect that he has been chosen from the whole race of man to enact the part of God upon earth ; he is the arbiter of life and death, of every fortune and position. *These thousands of swords, let him say, which my Peace retains in their scabbards, are ready to leap forth at my nod : what nations shall be destroyed, or what removed ; who shall be freed and who enslaved ; what kings shall be enthroned or dethroned ; what cities built or razed ; all belongs to my absolute decision. Possessed of all this power, no anger has impelled me to the infliction of unjust punishments ; no youthful heat of mine, no rashness or contumacy of my people, no, nor yet the too common pride of proving the extent of my power, has tempted me to wanton violence. This day, if the gods require it, I*

*am prepared to read before them the roll of all the subjects they have given me charge of. . . . This, O Cæsar, he continues, you may boldly affirm, that none of the things which have fallen into your hands, have you by force or by fraud usurped. Innocence, the rarest merit of princes, innocence is yours. You have your reward. No man was ever so dear to his friend, as you are to the Roman people. Henceforth none will quote the conduct of the divine Augustus, or the first years of Tiberius: none will look beyond yourself for an example of virtue: we shall gauge the remainder of your principate by the flavour of your first twelve-month.*<sup>1</sup> From this last expression it appears that the tract was composed towards the end of Nero's first year of government, and up to that period at least, according to the writer's testimony, his administration had been unsullied by cruelty or any glaring crime. Yet the evidence of history cannot be set aside which declares that it had already been disgraced by a deed of the most heinous dye; and whatever might be its general colour thus far, this deed alone was enough to suffuse it with an indelible stain.

It would seem that Agrippina's intrigues to recover her influence in the palace had met with little success. While still sparing his mother from the feelings of fear or respect which had not yet lost all their force, he intimated his dissatisfaction by removing the favourites on whose counsels she leaned, or by whose hands she acted. He disgraced Pallas, who had acted as the chief minister of Claudius, and now demanded of the new emperor a pledge that no inquiry should be made into his transactions in that capacity; that all accounts, as he phrased it, between himself and the state should be considered as settled. Deprived of his offices, and dismissed from court, he was exposed shortly afterwards to a

Disgrace of Pallas: alarm and menaces of Agrippina.

A. D. 55.  
A. U. 808.

<sup>1</sup> Senec. *De Clementia*, i. 1.: "*Principatus tuus ad anni gustum exigitur.*" Such is the admirable reading elicited by Lipsius from the MS. *ad augustum*, which, though conjectural, seems sufficiently certain.

charge of conspiring against the emperor, from which Seneca himself defended him. But meanwhile his disgrace alone sufficed to arouse the terrors of Agrippina. Forgetting her recent dissimulation, she gave vent to furious menaces and reproaches. Mortified at the growing influence of her son's tutors, she had intimated to him that it was to her he owed the empire: she now went further, and let him understand not less plainly that she had the means of withdrawing it again.<sup>1</sup> The patroness of Pallas declared aloud that Britannicus, now approaching his fourteenth birthday, was arrived at manhood:<sup>2</sup> she proclaimed him the genuine offspring and natural heir of Claudius, and threatened to divulge openly the secret horrors of the palace, to avow the iniquity of her marriage, and even confess the murder of her husband. But whatever, she said, were her crimes, one thing more she had done: she had preserved the life of her stepson. Now she would rush with him to the camp. The soldiers should decide between the daughter of Germanicus and the wretched Burrhus and Seneca, who presumed, forsooth, to sway the empire of the world, the one with his maimed hand, the other with his glib professor's tongue. Thus saying, she clenched her hand in an attitude of menace, and stormed with bitter curses, adjuring the spirit of the deified Claudius, and the shades of the murdered Silani, and the victims of all the crimes she had herself, now it seemed in vain, committed.<sup>3</sup>

That Nero should be alarmed at this defiance was only natural: we cannot doubt that it now first impressed him

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lxi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> I suppose him to have been born in the first year of Claudius, the twentieth day of his reign, *i. e.* February 12. 704. Suet. *Claud.* 27. But this writer is wrong in placing this date in the *second* consulship of Claudius. Tacitus, again, is in error in saying that Nero was only two years his senior. He must have been the elder by more than three years. See *Ann.* xii. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 14.: "Audiretur hinc Germanici filia, inde vilis rursus Burrhus et exul Seneca trunca scilicet manu et professoria lingua generis humani regimen expostulantes." We do not know whether the "trunca manus" refers to an actual mutilation, or is merely figurative.



Nero's plea for  
the murder of  
Britannicus.

with a sense of the danger to be apprehended from his mother's temper, and made him feel that while Britannicus lived his own life and throne were in her power.<sup>1</sup> He had assumed the purple, as we have seen, in October. Already, before the end of the year, in the third month of his reign, whether from rising jealousy towards him, or from mere capricious ill-humour, he had insulted the poor child in the presence of his boon companions. At a supper he gave during the Saturnalian festival in December, he had taken occasion, as *king of the feast*, to mortify his bashful timidity by requiring him to stand up and sing before the company. Even the half-tipsy revellers had been shocked at this indignity, for as such it was regarded, and expressed still more pointedly their compassion when Britannicus chanted a lyric stave on the sorrows of the dis-crowned and disinherited.<sup>2</sup> The emperor was disconcerted; he began to brood from this time over the specious claims of the pretender, and Agrippina's threats satisfied him that they were really formidable. Yet he could make as yet no public charge against him, and he did not venture to command his execution, unarraigned and unconvicted. He resolved, we are assured, to take him off privily; and engaged a tribune of the guards, named Pollio, to devise safe and secret means. The infamous Locusta, who was at the moment in custody on a charge of poisoning, was taken into counsel. All the attendants who loved the poor youth had long since been removed from about him. There was no hand to intercept the noxious potions which were administered to him by his own tutors. But the poison seemed to fail of its effect, and Nero grew impatient.<sup>3</sup> He stormed at the tribune, he

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 15.: "Exorsus est carmen, quo evolutum cum sede patria rebusque summis significabatur." Suetonius repeats what may be called an idle insinuation, that Nero put Britannicus to death from jealousy of his skill in singing. *Ner.* 33.

<sup>3</sup> Sir G. Cornwall Lewis remarks on the failure of the first attempt to poison Claudius, as a proof that the art was not so well understood at this time at Rome as in certain periods of modern history. *Early Roman History*, ii.



menaced the poisoner, as traitors to his cause, and interested only in averting suspicion from themselves. They promised to serve him faithfully the next time; the poison was now prepared in the palace itself under the emperor's own eyes, and he was assured that it would cause death as swiftly as steel itself.<sup>1</sup> Confident of the result, he contrived his crime with an audacity perhaps unparalleled. Britannicus was seated, as still a minor, at the table Britannicus is poisoned. where the younger scions of the imperial family partook of their simpler meal together, while their elders banqueted in full state beside them. There the warm wine-cup was tasted in due course, and presented to him. He found it too hot, and in the drop of cold water which was infused into it so deadly a poison was conveyed, that the child, on swallowing it, fell back lifeless without a word or a groan. All the guests beheld it. Some rushed in terror from the apartment; others, warier, and more collected, still kept their seats, and bent their eyes on Nero. He, without rising from his couch, assured them placidly that such were the fits to which his brother was subject, and that his senses would soon return. The body was removed: the guests addressed themselves, as they were bidden, again to the banquet; but the alarm and horror of Agrippina, remembering perhaps the scene which had occurred four months earlier in that festive hall, were so marked, that it was clear to all that she at least was guiltless of this crime; while the wretched Octavia, with the self control which long necessity had taught her, suppressed all signs of emotion, and betrayed neither grief nor affection nor

485. note. Here is a second instance of inexperience. We must be the more cautious, therefore, how we trust to the many rumours of poisoning accredited by the Roman writers.

<sup>1</sup> Suetonius adds various particulars to the account of Tacitus. Nero, he says, called Locusta to him, abused and struck her, declaring that she had given an antidote instead of poison. When she excused herself, affirming that she had made the dose weak the better to disguise the crime: *As if*, he exclaimed, *I feared the Julian law* (against murderers and poisoners)! He then caused her to prepare the potion in his own apartments, and tried it on various animals, till he found it strong enough to kill a young pig instantaneously.

fear. That same night the corpse of Britannicus was consumed; his simple pyre had been prepared, it seems, beforehand. The obsequies took place in the Campus Martius, in the midst of a sudden tempest, betokening to the citizens the divine indignation at a deed of blood which men had generally agreed to excuse as a state necessity.<sup>1</sup> The accounts which Dion followed added a further horror to the scene, declaring that the rain washed off the paint with which the body had been coloured, and disclosed the livid stains of poison. In a winter's night, amidst the smoke of half-extinguished torches, such an incident could hardly have been observable.<sup>2</sup>

From first to last every circumstance connected with this hideous fratricide was carried out with the same coolness and calculating prevision. No long-experienced adept in crimes of state could have acted with more consummate art than the timid stripling before us, who blushed at being discovered in the embrace of a freedwoman. No sooner were the hasty obsequies completed, than an edict followed in which their haste was excused and defended by argument and example. Nero adroitly seized this occasion to recommend himself to the citizens whose sensibility he had outraged. Having lost, he said, the support of a dear brother, he must now look for aid and sympathy to the republic itself. He claimed a deeper interest in the affections of his people since he had become the last of the imperial stock, the sole remaining hope of a nation to whom the blood of Cæsar was dear. The emperor completed his crime by showering presents, houses, and estates on the favourites of the palace: among them were some, at least, whose professions of superior gravity made their participation in these spoils, for as such they were regarded, peculiarly invidious.<sup>3</sup> The hand of a master of

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 18.; Suet. *Ner.* 33. Suetonius, however, says that the funeral followed the next day.

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxi. 7. This assassination probably took place immediately after the birthday of Britannicus, the 12th, as before observed, of February.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 18. In this remark the interpreters have generally sup-

state-craft can hardly be mistaken throughout these proceedings; and there is one only, as far as we can judge, to whom it can be reasonably ascribed. Posterity, while it shrinks from condemning, must not venture to acquit him.<sup>1</sup> At all events, we have seen that, much later than this, the clemency of Nero's first year was celebrated by Seneca as the special glory of his own instructions. It is clear that, at least, after the deed was done he consented to absolve the perpetrator, and to persuade the world, as far as his silence could avail to persuade it, either that no murder had been committed, or that no defence was required for it.

Grounds for imputing this crime to the advice of Seneca.

The temptations under which the philosopher lay to this duplicity are sufficiently obvious. His influence could only be maintained by parrying the counter projects of Agrippina; and his influence once lost, there could be no more hope for Nero or for Rome, for himself no retreat but in absolute insignificance, could even that avail to save him. Undoubtedly his position was a trying one. He believed that his power at court enabled him to direct the empire for the general welfare. The common weal was, after all, the grand object of the heroes of Roman story. Few of the renowned of old had attained their eminence as public benefactors, without steeling their hearts against the purest instincts of nature. The deeds of a Brutus or a Manlius, of a Sulla or a Cæsar, would have been branded as crimes in private citizens; it was the public character of the actors that stamped them with immortal glory in the eyes of their countrymen. Even Seneca, sage as he was, was not superior to the sophistry

Importance of making Nero's power secure. Seneca aims at making him popular with the senate.

posed that he points at Seneca. Suetonius (l. c.) says that Locusta was rewarded with large estates, and provided with pupils to be instructed in the state mystery of poisoning.

<sup>1</sup> We need pay no attention, I think, to the charges of Dion against Seneca (lxi. 10.), which seem animated with more than his usual malignity against men of reputation for virtue, and miss, besides, the peculiar weaknesses which are justly imputable to the philosopher.



which might have justified the murder of Britannicus by the precedent of Romulus and Remus. Meanwhile he was studious in directing the public administration of his pupil to the general advantage of the empire, to the credit and advantage more particularly of the senatorial order, which was perhaps the best direction the government could at that moment take.<sup>1</sup> While it was the best for the people, it was, at the same time, the most prudent for the prince. A contented senate made a secure emperor. Claudius well understood this, and the favour he showed to this proud and privileged body was the secret of his immunity from senatorial conspiracies, and enabled him to quit the city for the provinces without apprehension, which Tiberius had never ventured to do. This policy was the most conducive also to the prince's reputation. The fame of Nero's five years rests mainly on the favour it obtained from a courted and therefore an indulgent senate. The fathers balanced against the crime of fratricide the fact that their chief had rejected statues of gold and silver; that he had refused to allow the year to commence with his own natal month of December, and retained the ancient solemnity of the Kalends of January; that he had checked with a gentle remonstrance the impetuous zeal which offered to swear to all his acts beforehand; that he had dismissed with contempt the charges of a delator against a knight and a senator.<sup>2</sup>

The schism between the mother and the son seemed now complete. Agrippina embraced the wretched orphan Octa-

<sup>1</sup> We may ascribe, perhaps, to the liberal views of the minister the geographical inquiries instituted by Nero in the direction of the Caspian Sea and the country of the Ethiopians (Plin. *H. N.* vi. 15. 35.), which were vulgarly supposed to be preparatory to some military enterprises. Comp. Senec. *Nat. Quæst.* vi. 8. The long digression of Lucan (*Phars.* x.) on the subject of the river Nile seems to indicate the interest of the best-informed men of the empire, and particularly, perhaps, of his uncle Seneca, in these expeditions of discovery. The yearning for extended physical knowledge is one of the most curious features of Lucan's poem.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 10. Comp. Suet. *Ner.* 10. "Agenti Senatui gratias respondit: quum meruero."



via, and declared herself the protectress of her injured innocence. She called her friends into consultation in private: she collected money from all quarters with an avidity which indicated some political project. She cultivated the regard of military officers, and caressed the remnant of the ancient nobility, as if seeking to make a party and secure a chief for it. All this was disclosed to Nero, who retaliated first by withdrawing the guard by which the empress was attended, and then removing her from her apartments in the palace to the mansion formerly inhabited by Antonia, that the attendants at his own receptions might have no pretext for presenting themselves to her likewise. When he paid her a formal visit here, he was always escorted by a military guard, and restricted the interview to a brief salutation. This marked disfavour had a strong effect on the courtiers. The door of Agrippina became rapidly deserted. Of her ancient friends none but a few women continued to visit her. Among these was Junia Silana, the spouse of C. Silius, whom Messalina had required him to divorce, and who now, in constant hatred of the dead empress, still clung to the side of her rival and successor. Yet she had a feud with Agrippina also; for when she had proposed to solace herself with another marriage, it was Agrippina who had set the object of her choice against her; and her present attachment was only simulated with a view to vengeance. As soon as she was assured that the mother had lost all influence with her son, she seized the moment to strike. She suborned two confederates to denounce Agrippina as conspiring against the throne, and averred that it was her scheme to raise Rubellius Plautus, the son of Blandus, who stood in the same relationship to Augustus as Nero himself, first to empire and then to her own bed.<sup>1</sup> There was another woman in the plot. The

Division between Nero and Agrippina.

Her enemies intrigue against her.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 19. Rubellius Plautus was son of Rubellius Blandus (already mentioned in chap. xlv.) and of Julia, daughter of Drusus, granddaughter of Tiberius. He was, therefore, through his grandmother, great-great-grandson of Augustus. Nero was great-great-grandson of Augustus through his grandfather Germanicus.

pretended conspiracy was divulged to a freedman of Domitia, whose hostility to Agrippina was well known: Domitia passed on the witnesses to Paris, a favourite of Nero; and late one night, in the sacred privacy of his carousal, the emperor was startled by the appearance of this confidential servant, with an assumed look of deep anxiety, and received intimation of the unnatural crime which was said to be meditated against him. The weak-spirited youth, whose nerves were already shaken with premature dissipation, believed without further inquiry, and would have yielded at once to the suggestions of his sudden alarm. He would have commanded not only the immediate execution of Plautus, but the removal of Burrhus from his military post, on the mere suspicion that, having been originally raised by Agrippina, he would be disposed now to support her. But these intrigues of the palace were, it is confessed, obscure even to the citizens at the time. Some writers affirmed that Burrhus was only kept in his place by the interposition of Seneca; while others, less notorious for their partiality to that statesman, made no mention of any doubt on Nero's part of the fidelity of Burrhus.<sup>1</sup> Yet all combined, without hesitation, in asserting that Nero was already willing and even anxious to rid himself of his mother, and was only deterred from at once commanding her death by the assurance of Burrhus that she should be sentenced judicially if the crime were proved against her. Every culprit, it was honestly insisted, might claim a hearing, and above all a parent. As yet there were no accusers, but merely a single informer against her; and he the emissary of a hostile house. Nero acquiesced, heavy perhaps with wine, and unaccustomed to argument.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 20.: "Fabius Rusticus auctor est . . . spe Senecæ dignationem Burrho retentam. Plinius et Cluvius, nihil dubitatum de fide præfecti referunt. *Sane Fabius inclinât ad laudes Senecæ.*" The student of Tacitus will remark the numerous instances in which the author intimates his dislike to Seneca. He could not forgive him for his connection with the monster Nero, who lived to be detested more than all their tyrants by the senate and aristocracy.

This rapid consultation took place that night: the next morning Agrippina was required to hear the charge against her and refute it. Burrhus conducted the examination, and Seneca attended. Burrhus, anxious perhaps for himself, was violent and overbearing. All the spirit of the virago flashed out at once. She, too, spared neither sarcasm nor menaces. It was well, she said, for Silana, the childless, to suggest that she, a mother, had designs against the life of a son; as if mothers could put away their children as easily as strumpets their gallants. It was well for Domitia to vaunt her interest in Nero: she who was adorning her fishponds at Baïæ, while Agrippina was raising him to the family of the Cæsars, to the proconsular Potestas, to the hope and promise of the Consulship. And then she demanded an interview with the emperor in person, relying on the power of a mother's indignation or despair; and without deigning to assert her innocence, as if distrusting, nor to urge her claims, as if reproaching him, she bluntly required the punishment of her accusers, and the reward of her faithful adherents.

*Agrippina defends herself with spirit.*

The hardihood of Agrippina was crowned with more success than it merited. The charges against her were declared to be unfounded, and of those whom she denounced as the inventors of the calumny, Calvisius and Iturius were placed in distant confinement, the freedman Atimetus was put to death, while Silana herself was banished. Paris alone escaped free, by the special grace of the emperor, who admired his talents as an actor, and had received him into private intimacy. Rubellius himself, it seems, was not noticed at all. The favour which Burrhus, the blunt uncourtly soldier, still retained, is even more remarkable. Not only were the insinuations levelled on this occasion against him disregarded, but when soon afterwards he was accused, together with Pallas, of intriguing for a Cornelius Sulla, he was allowed to take his place among the judges, and turn the charge against himself into a process against his accuser. Burrhus again, and Pallas

*The charges against her are declared unfounded.*



under his wing, were triumphantly acquitted, while their assailant Pætus was himself condemned to banishment.<sup>1</sup>

Such were the firmness and moderation of Nero's administration throughout the first model year of his principate; and for some years afterwards it continued to be conducted, for the most part, on similar principles. It was Nero's dissolute amusements, undoubtedly the administration, not of the young prince himself, but of the shrewd and thoughtful men to whom he had given his confidence; and Seneca deserves the praise of abstinence from bloodshed and violence, and a laudable care to retain his patron in the paths of ancient usage. The license he meanwhile extended to his private amusements may readily be pardoned. If it was impossible to engage the light-minded youth in the details of business, there may have been no better course than to absorb him in frivolous pleasures, which should leave him neither leisure nor inclination to interfere with the government at all. Such seems to have been the view Seneca took of the alternative before him. But in after years the frivolity of Nero, and the vile character of his pastimes, seem to have incensed the Romans against him no less than the tyranny which accompanied them: the dislike with which Seneca is regarded by Tacitus was caused perhaps mainly by the belief that it was he who corrupted the principles of his tender charge, and undermined in him the stern simplicity of the Roman character. The carelessness with which Nero began soon to exhibit himself in the circus and the theatre will appear hereafter; but already in the second year of his reign he condescended to roam the streets disguised as a slave, accompanied by his boon companions, snatching the wares exposed for sale, cuffing the angry owners, and sometimes receiving blows in return.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 23. Faustus Cornelius Sulla was husband of Antonia, and son in law of Claudius, cons. A. U. 805, A. D. 52. *Ann.* xii. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 25. We know not what exaggeration there may be in these stories. When after an evening's debauch Nero appeared next morning without any marks of injury on his visage, it was whispered that he had applied a lotion of sovereign efficacy to his skin, the ingredients of which were indicated with precision. Plin. *H. N.* xiii. 43.



These freaks soon became notorious, and many dissolute youths were encouraged by the example to perpetrate like excesses. But when Montanus, a senator, struck the emperor unawares in one of these nocturnal encounters, and, on discovering him, too openly begged his pardon, he received an order to kill himself. Thenceforth Nero took care to have soldiers always at hand to protect him. This taste for vulgar brawls induced him to foster the passions of the stage, until the licentiousness of the spectators became intolerable; and it was found necessary to expel the histrions, or pantomimic dancers, and to restore the guard, which, from the time of Augustus till recently, had kept the police of the theatres.<sup>1</sup>

A. D. 56.  
A. U. 809.

While such, however, were the early indications of a corrupt and feeble character which the young prince exhibited, to the sorrow of decent citizens and alarm of the wiser and more thoughtful, various incidents in his administration recommended it strongly to different classes of his people. The populace, ever favourably impressed by marks of family affection, were pleased at the respect he had seemed to show to the memory of his predecessor. Though they despised Claudius when alive, they acquiesced in the ascription of divine honours to him after death, and thought it highly becoming in his successor to build him a temple after the manner of his ancestors, and appoint a college of Claudian Flamens from among the highest families of the city.<sup>2</sup> Nor did Nero disdain to recognise the claims of his natural father, while paying these honours to

Consecration of  
a temple to  
Claudius.

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus says: "Non aliud remedium repertum est quam ut histriones Italia pellerentur, milesque theatro rursum insideret." The soldiers had been just before withdrawn. The histrions or mimes are to be distinguished from other performers. It was only the former that were expelled; the latter were retained, under the superintendence of a military guard, which Augustus had originally assigned for that purpose.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xii. ult. The temple of Claudius on the Cælian hill is supposed to have stood on the oblong platform, scarped on three sides, now occupied by the garden of the Passionists, and marked from a distance by a few slender eypresses. Ampère, *Hist. Rom. à Rome*, § 3.

the adoptive. He obtained a statue for Domitius from the senate. For Asconius Labeo, who had been his guardian after his father's death and still survived, he demanded the consular ornaments. This attention to the claims of others was accompanied by modesty in regard to himself. His liberality was eminently conspicuous. To preserve their rank to some impoverished senators, he endowed them with the census which the law required. At the same time he followed the example of Augustus and Claudius in respecting the prescriptions of the state religion. When the temples of Jupiter and Minerva,—two of the cells perhaps of the triple temple in the Capitol,—were struck with lightning, he caused the city to be illustrated, by the advice of the Haruspices. Of this solemn ceremonial the most picturesque feature was a procession of the priests of the various services; the Salii bearing the golden shields on their heads; the Vestals guarding the sacred Palladium; the Galli who lave in Almo the Mother of the Gods; with the noble Augurs and thrice-noble Flamens, the Septemvirs and Epulones, and every lesser priesthood girt with the simple cincture of the rustic Gabii.<sup>1</sup>

We do not hear, indeed, that Nero took any personal part in the government; and whatever merit there was in his administration must in fairness be ascribed to the ministers rather than to their master. Nor can we give him the lesser praise of deliberately choosing his instruments well, and submitting his own inexperience to their riper judgment. Seneca and Burrhus had been given him by Agrippina. The rare occasions on which the prince appears on the public scene during this period were prepared for him by these advisers, and the kindly acts or sayings imputed to him were doubtless suggested by them.

Favourable  
characteristics  
of Nero's early  
government.

<sup>1</sup> Lucan gives a spirited description of the procession, which no doubt he witnessed himself (*Phars.* i. 592.):

“Tum jubet et totam pavidis a civibus urbem  
Ambiri, et festo purgantes moenia lustrò  
Longa per extremos pomœria cingere fines  
Pontifices, sacri quibus est permissa potestas,” &c.

Thus much it seems just to detract from the fame of Nero's Quinquennium: nevertheless, setting aside all question of the real authorship of the acts belonging to it, the general course of government deserves apparently the praise it has received. The kindness of *kings upon their coronation day* has passed into a proverb. Little stress need be laid on the gracious promises of Nero at his accession, when words could cost him nothing, and might gain him much. His declarations in favour of justice and generosity were carried out consistently as long as there was no temptation to tyranny. The senate and magistrates were suffered to exercise their functions without control. If he ever interfered within their jurisdiction, it was in the direction of mercy, to overrule harsh sentences, or to mitigate them.<sup>1</sup> Never, however, was there a period more noted for the punishment of great criminals, especially of officers convicted of extortion in the provinces.<sup>2</sup> But all these cases were prosecuted in due course of law; no irregular procedure was allowed even to further the ends of justice; and, above all, the practice of delation was rigidly repressed. This, no doubt, was the circumstance which invested the early years of Nero with their brightest colours. There were no trials on charges of Majestas; and Nero showed himself, even to a late period, superior to petty mortifications from raillery and libel.<sup>3</sup> The empire had grown consciously stronger since the time of Tiberius, and could afford to disregard ridicule. Stories were current of the unwonted humanity evinced by this lord of the world, such as was seldom shown by the master of a score of bondmen. When required to set his name to a sentence of death, *Would to God*, he exclaimed, *that I had never learned to write!*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the cases mentioned by Tacitus, *Ann.* xiii. 43. 52.; and again xiii. 27., xiv. 18. 22. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 30. 33. 42., xiv. 18. 26. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 39.: "Mirum . . . nihil eum patientius quam maledicta et convicia hominum tulisse."

<sup>4</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 10.: "Quam vellem nescire literas." The story is from Seneca, who takes occasion to remind his blushing pupil of it (*De Clem.* ii. 1.): "Ut de



The financial measures of this epoch display, as far as we can trace them, not only a liberality which might be confounded with mere thoughtless profusion, but some indications of a wise and intelligent policy.

Liberality of  
Nero's financial  
measures.

Nero inherited from Claudius the best of all legacies to a despot, a full treasury and a flourishing revenue. He could give without borrowing; he could endow without extorting. A donative to the soldiers, the necessary condition of their support, was followed by a largess to the people, prudent, no doubt, but not equally indispensable. Fresh drafts of veterans were established, with the surrender of public domains, in the colonies of Capua and Nuceria. Another measure, of which we should much wish to know the particulars, was the advance, apparently, of certain sums to the treasury, to maintain, as the historian oracularly phrases it, the solvency of the Roman people. We may conjecture that this liberality was meant to relieve the farmers of the tolls and tributes, or other responsible agents of finance. It amounted, we are told, only to forty millions of sesterces; and it is hard to conceive any great public relief being effected by a loan or even a gift of 320,000 pounds sterling.<sup>1</sup> In their excessive jealousy of taxation the citizens had complained that a rate of one twenty-fifth or four per cent. was exacted by the state on the purchase-money of slaves. The buyer of these articles of luxury was in most cases the Roman, the vendor was the subject or foreigner; and when the imperial government transferred the tax from the buyer to the vendor, the multitude were led to suppose that they had actually escaped it, not perceiving that the amount of the rate was still as before levied upon them in the advanced price of the commodity.<sup>2</sup> Nor was it the ruling caste only

*elementia scriberem, Nero Caesar, una me vox tua maxime compulit: quam ego non sine admiratione et cum diceretur audisse memini, et deinde aliis narrasse,"*  
&c.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 31.: "Sestertium quadringentis ærario illatum est ad retinendam populi fidem."

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus (l. c.) remarks this consequence: "Specie magis quam vi, quia cum venditor pendere juberetur, in partem pretii emptoribus accrescebat."



towards which this consideration was extended. When the proconsuls and other magistrates abroad were forbidden to exhibit gladiators and wild beasts in their provinces, the restriction must have been meant to relieve the subjects of the state from the burden of providing them.<sup>1</sup>

This gleam of consideration for the interests of a class to whom it was so rarely extended by the Roman statesmen, seems to indicate a change of feeling in the conquerors towards the conquered, which we are prompt to remark, expecting important consequences to follow. But we are still doomed to be disappointed. Meagre and inconclusive are the notices we find regarding the views of the imperial administration. It is impossible to construct from them anything which may be called a policy. We note the glimmer of a great social principle beneath the folds of political history; but in a moment the field of vision is overclouded, and we dare not indulge the speculations which have risen in our minds, lest it should appear that they are founded on a misapprehension of our own, or on a misstatement of our informant. After the financial measures just mentioned, Tacitus proceeds to speak of another, apparently of much greater importance. The circumstance refers to the fourth year of Nero's reign, and is thus stated by the historian, the obscurity or confusion of whose account it may be well to exhibit, to show by a single instance how little precision is to be looked for in the prince of pictorial narrators. So numerous, he says, were the complaints of *the people* against the extortions of the publicans, that Nero actually meditated surrendering all *duties*, and conferring the noblest of all presents on *the human race*. But the senators, with much praise of his liberality, restrained his ardour, by proving that the empire would be dissolved if the imposts by which it was supported should be diminished: for it was clear that if the *duties* were abolished, a remission of *taxes* would be speedily demanded. They showed

His proposal to abolish the vectigalia.

A. D. 58.  
A. U. 811.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. l c.: "Ne quis magistratus aut procurator qui provinciam obtineret, spectaculum gladiatorum aut ferarum, aut quod aliud ludicrum ederet."

that many associations for farming the revenues had been established by *consuls and tribunes of the plebs* at a period when the *Roman people* were most jealous of their liberties: . . . they allowed, however, that it was expedient to put some restrictions on the cupidity of the publicans.<sup>1</sup> The question here arises whether the duties, of which Nero would have made a present to the *human race*, were those which prevailed generally throughout the empire, or whether they refer only to such as were peculiar to the ruling caste of citizens. Undoubtedly the offer, at first sight, seems to be universal; and so it has been generally regarded by the critics, historians, and writers on Roman finance. Yet there are words in the passage which seem to me very clearly to limit its application to the Roman citizens only, the class for whom, according to ideas which had not yet lost their force, the subject races of the empire toiled, unpitied and unregarded.

The question must be discussed at greater length. The abolition of the whole system of indirect taxation throughout the empire would indeed have been the conception of a madman. It could only have been effected in company with an immense increase of direct payments, such as the land-tax, poll-tax, and property-tax, at a time when the state has relinquished all claim to the absolute use and possession of its conquered territories. But no such increase, it would seem, was contemplated. Nor, again, is the establishment of such a system of free-trade, by the removal of all imposts on commercial transactions between land and land, consistent with the spirit of the time, and the cherished ideas of antiquity, which were far as yet from realizing an equality of rights among mankind. Doubtless Seneca was in advance of his age; doubtless he would speak even more freely as a philosopher than he would act as

Examination of  
what it really  
imports.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 50.: "*Crebris populi flagitationibus immodestiam publicanorum arguentis, dubitavit Nero an cuncta vectigalia omitti juberet, idque pulcherrimum donum generi mortalium daret . . . Plerasque vectigalium societates a Consulibus et Tribunis plebis constitutas, acri etiam populi Romani tum libertate.*"

a statesman; yet the rare expressions of political liberality which have been gleaned from his writings would be a very insufficient ground for ascribing to him any profound views on this subject. *Virtue*, he says in one place, *embraces all men together, freedmen, slaves and kings. . . . We are born to a common inheritance. . . . Wisdom invites the human race to live together in amity.*<sup>1</sup> Such common places as these constitute at best but a slender claim to the praise of practical liberalism. It seems therefore impossible to suppose that Nero really meant to remit the whole custom duties of the empire. I would limit the extent of his scheme to a surrender of duties payable on commodities and transactions in Italy, and the colonies of Roman citizens. Such a remission would have had a clear analogy to defend it. From the time of the conquest of Macedonia the land-tax had been remitted to the citizens, though the census or property-tax on moveables, which also bore the invidious name of *tribute*, continued to press upon them. But the popular tribune Metellus Nepos had abolished the indirect taxation of tolls and dues in Italy, and it was with great soreness that the citizen had seen this burden reimposed by Julius Cæsar, and maintained, as a state necessity, by the triumvirs and the emperors. We may easily believe that the young impulsive Nero conceived it worthy of the successor of the tribunes, to abolish once more this detested impost upon the favoured caste; and this was probably as far as his liberality extended. The flourish about *a boon to the human race* was an indiscreet bravado either of the ignorant prince, or of the

<sup>1</sup> Senec. *De Benef.* iii.-18.: "Virtus omnes admittit, libertinos, servos, reges." *Epist.* 95.: "Membra sumus magni corporis . . . natura nos cognatos edidit." *Epist.* 90.: "Sapientia genus humanum ad concordiam vocat." These and a few more passages, in which God is called our *common parent*, slaves and freemen are said to be *naturally equal*, &c., constitute, I think, the writer's whole claim to the character of a cosmopolite. They are once only faintly echoed by Lucan, *Phars.* i. 60.:

"Tum genus humanum positis sibi consulat armis,  
Inque vicem gens omnis amet."



unreflecting historian. Nero's advisers, indeed, naturally pointed out that the burdens of which the citizens complained had been originally imposed, not by triumvirs and emperors, but by the consuls and tribunes of the free state. Rome in the height of her pride and independence had felt no humiliation in submitting to them. But were her claim to exemption from these dues conceded, she would have a pretence for demanding abolition of the tribute or census also, and for obtaining that complete immunity which was the dearest wish of her indolent selfishness.<sup>1</sup> Nero, whose generosity was a mere impulse, founded on no principle of policy or humanity, was no doubt easily persuaded to desist from his scheme; and perhaps we may trace in the genuine liberality of his advisers, who discouraged such an indulgence to a special class, the wider and wiser views of the sage who presided over them. The project resulted in a few sensible regulations of detail; for making the revenue laws better known that they might be better obeyed; for limiting the claims for arrears; for putting the publicani under stricter supervision; for abolishing a few trivial but vexatious imposts; for relieving the importer of grain from the pressure of certain burdens; and with this view exempting the ships of the corn merchants from the common tax on property.<sup>2</sup>

The salutary regulations here recorded belong to the first three or four years of this principate; but the general improvement of the administration depended on principles which continued to operate through the first half, at least, and in many cases to the end of a reign of more than thirteen years. So long did

The policy of  
Nero gives  
satisfaction to  
the Senate.

<sup>1</sup> It will be seen that I regard the phrase of Tacitus, "donum generi humano," as an incorrect expression. We are not yet in a position to consider whether the times in which the historian himself wrote offered any excuse for this mistake. At a later period the exemption of Italy from the land-tax was annulled, and the whole empire placed on an equal footing in respect of fiscal burdens. Savigny thinks that this took place in the time of Diocletian (see *Vermischte Schrift.* i. 43.), from an obscure passage in Aurelius Victor (*Cæsar* 30.), on the occasion of the permanent establishment of an imperial court and army in Italy.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 51.



Nero persist, under the guidance of trusty counsellors, in maintaining the dignity of the senatorial order, as the highest judicial and legislative tribunal. The position of Seneca and Burrhus in antagonism to Agrippina could only be maintained by upholding the authority of the senate; the activity of which is attested by the number of laws and decrees which at this period emanated from it. The youth and inexperience of Nero, overwhelmed as he was by the weight of affairs which the recent example of his laborious predecessor forbade him to reject, compelled him to rely on these practised advisers; and the more so as the odium which attached to the whole class of the imperial freedmen required him to waive their succour. The dispersion of the secret conclave gave immediate relief to the senate, which breathed more freely, and acted more boldly, when it felt that no private influence stood between it and the throne. It expressed the sense of its recovered liberty, partly by the loudest eulogies of the new reign, partly by renewed activity within the now extended sphere of its operations.<sup>1</sup> On the occasion of a military success in Armenia, it not only saluted Nero as Emperor, and decreed the customary supplications, arches, and statues; but established an annual commemoration of the days on which the victory was gained, the news brought home, and the decree made concerning it. *Were we to thank the Gods*, said C. Cassius, *according to their kindness, the whole year would not suffice us. Let it be at once divided into two portions, one for public affairs, the other for giving thanks for Nero.* Even the irony of a senator who bore the

<sup>1</sup> Hoeck has collected from the Digest the names of certain *Senatusconsulta*; viz. Silanianum, Calvisianum, Memmianum, Trebellianum, and Neronianum, which may be referred to this period. They apply to the treatment of slaves, to adoption, to testamentary trusts, &c. See *Röm. Gesch.* i. 3. p. 356. fol. Nero transferred to the senate a share of the appeals in civil cases, which recent princes (and perhaps Claudius more particularly, in his insatiable appetite for business) had grasped for themselves. At a later period he relinquished the labour and responsibility altogether. Such, at least, seems the best way of reconciling the discrepancy between Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 28. and Suet. *Ner.* 17. See note of Baumgarten Crusius in loc. Suet.

name of a tyrannicide, if irony it were, proved the freedom of speech now permitted to his order.<sup>1</sup>

The ancient usage of the republic still required the prince to take his seat on the tribunal; and there, assisted by his council, Nero, like Claudius before him, listened to appeals from the ordinary courts of justice, and gave final sentence from his own breast. Warned, however, by his predecessor's example, he limited the addresses of the rival pleaders, and checked vague declamation by requiring each point to be separately discussed before opening on another.<sup>2</sup> His judgments were issued always in writing, and after mature deliberation; and in the interval he expected his assessors to give him their opinions separately, from which he made up his own in private, and delivered it as the common decision of the cabinet. It would seem, from this account of his public conduct, that he was strongly impressed with the conviction that he held power on sufferance only; and was not blinded by adulation to the precariousness of his position as the first citizen of an aristocratic republic. But as long as he executed his delegated functions for the common weal of his order, they, on their part, made no inquisition into the privacy of his domestic life. The curtains which the Roman drew across the vestibule of his mansion were a sacred screen, behind which none could enter unbidden. Within that veil the courteous statesman or the bland philosopher might play the tyrant to his slaves, to his children, and to his women. There self-indulgence and debauchery in their grossest shapes sheltered themselves alike from the decrees of the censors, and the murmurs of public opinion. It was not till a later period,

No inquiry  
made into the  
irregularities of  
his private life.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 15. Baumgarten Crusius explains him thus: "Er liess die Sache Punkt für Punkt untersuchen;" "propuctis testibus, literis, aliisque judicii instrumentis, idque per vias, utraque parte alternatim audita. Hic igitur transitus fuit ad nostrorum judiciorum (the German) morem ab antiquo, qui observatur in Britannia adhuc terris Gallie subjectis." This, no doubt, is the improvement to which Seneca points in his sneer at the impatience of Claudius: "Una tantum parte audita, sæpe et neutra."

when the fall of Nero dissipated all lingering reserve, that the inner life of the palace was disclosed to the eyes of the citizens, and the process laid bare, step by step, by which he was corrupted into a monster of depravity. Already, beneath the show of care for the interests of the state, he was learning to regard his own safety, his own convenience, as paramount to every obligation, and trying what amount of horrors the world would bear for the sake of his gracious administration.

But Rome was tranquil; the citizens were content; the senate, affecting to speak the voice of the nation, pronounced Nero the best of its princes since Augustus.

Affairs might seem to run more smoothly even from the absence of great principles to guide them. Nero differed from all his predecessors in the extent to which he suffered affairs to take their natural course. Julius Cæsar had deliberately overthrown old forms and prescriptions which he felt to be obsolete, confident of the creative force of his own master-genius. Augustus strove to revive the past. Tiberius was content with shaping the present. Caius, awakened in his youthful inexperience to the real character of the station which his predecessors had disguised from themselves and the world, chose rashly to claim for it all the prerogatives which logically belonged to it. Claudius affected, in the narrow spirit of a pedant on the throne, to govern mankind by personal vigilance, as a master governs his household. Nero, at last, or his advisers for him, seems to have renounced all general views, to have abstained from interfering with the machinery of empire, and contented himself with protecting it from disturbance. The tradition of the felicity of these five auspicious years, to which the best of this prince's successors gave long afterwards the palm of virtuous administration, attests the consciousness of the Romans that they were ruled with a masterly inactivity.<sup>1</sup>

The "Quinquennium Neronis."

<sup>1</sup> It was the well-known saying of the Emperor Trajan, fifty years later: "Procul differre cunctos principes Neronis quinquennio." Aurel. Victor, *Cæsar*. 5., *Epit.* 5.

Great honour is undoubtedly due to the men who actually governed for Nero, that they did so little to abuse their temporary ascendancy. There seems, however, less reason to extend our admiration to Nero himself, or to regard this happy result as the triumph of philosophy over youthful passions, and the fatal sense of irresponsibility. We must rather admit that his reserve was caused by incapacity or indifference, by an engrossing taste for frivolities which belonged to his tender years, or by the dissipation to which his position too naturally enticed him.



## CHAPTER LIII.

NERO'S PASSION FOR POPPÆA SABINA.—INTRIGUES AGAINST AGRIPPINA.—NERO'S MACHINATIONS AGAINST HER UNSUCCESSFUL.—SHE IS FINALLY DESPATCHED BY HIS ORDERS.—SENECA AND BURRHUS IMPLICATED IN THE MURDER.—INSTITUTION OF THE NERONIAN GAMES.—THE LUDI MAXIMI.—NERO'S INSENSIBILITY TO NATIONAL FEELING.—MODERATION IN REGARD TO CHARGES OF LIBEL AND MAJESTY.—DEATH OF BURRHUS.—SENECA SEEKS TO WITHDRAW FROM PUBLIC LIFE.—RISE AND INFLUENCE OF TIGELLINUS.—DEATH OF PLAUTUS AND SULLA.—NERO'S EXTRAVAGANCE AND CRUELTY.—REPUDIATION, BANISHMENT, AND DEATH OF OCTAVIA.—PROSECUTION OF WEALTHY FREEDMEN, DORYPHORUS AND PALLAS.—NERO'S PROGRESS IN LICENTIOUSNESS.—HE EXHIBITS HIMSELF IN THE CIRCUS.—HIS INFAMOUS DEBAUCHERY.—BURNING OF ROME.—PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.—RESTORATION OF THE CITY.—NERO'S GOLDEN HOUSE.—FURTHER EXACTIONS AND CONFISCATIONS.—CONSPIRACY OF PISO.—ITS DETECTION AND PUNISHMENT.—DEATH OF LUCAN AND SENECA.—PRETENDED DISCOVERY OF THE TREASURES OF DIDO.—DEATH OF POPPÆA.—FURTHER PROSCRIPTIONS.—STORMS AND PESTILENCE.—REFLECTIONS OF TACITUS.—DEATH OF ANNÆUS MELA.—PROSECUTION AND DEATH OF SORANUS AND THRASEA.—A.D. 58-66. A.U. 811-819.

THE legislation of Nero's principate has been examined, and the character of his civil administration depicted, from the notices of historians and jurists. The materials are slender, and the delineation is necessarily unsteady and superficial. Such is the public history of the times. But we now turn to an intrigue of the palace, a story of domestic hate and private crime, and we find its whole course, and every detail, described to us with the clearest and strongest lines; while to the careful inquirer more darkness really hovers over this picture than the other. A thoughtful reader can hardly peruse a sentence of the *Annals* of Tacitus, his chief guide at this period, without feeling that he is in unsafe hands. The matters of which

Uncertainty of  
the history of  
this period.

his author now treats had for the most part no public bearing; transacted in secret, they could only have been revealed by treacherous, or at least by interested narrators; and it is with vexation, not unmixed with wonder, that we remark the complacency with which he recounts events of which he could have had no certain knowledge, of which false and coloured statements must necessarily have been rife, and can hardly have failed to imbue the representations of the writers from whom he almost indiscriminately drew. *Many persons, says the Jewish historian Josephus, have undertaken to write the history of Nero; of whom some have disregarded the truth on account of favours received from him, others from personal hostility have indulged in abominable falsehoods.* As a foreigner, Josephus was exempt from many of the prejudices of the Romans; he regarded these matters from a more distant and a clearer point of view. Undoubtedly, the particular details of intrigue and crime, on which we are about to enter, must be received with caution and distrust; nevertheless, Josephus himself believes in the poisoning of Britannicus, and the murders, now to be related, of Agrippina and Octavia; the name of Nero is branded with atrocities which can neither be denied nor extenuated.<sup>1</sup> The story must be told as it is delivered to us, and no man will care to mar its horrible interest by scrutinizing step by step the ground on which he is treading.

Since her defeat by Seneca and Burrhus, at the outset of the new reign, the empress-mother seems to have refrained from provoking a further trial of strength; and, possibly, she regained by this prudent reserve a portion of the influence she had forfeited. When, after an interval of almost five years, the curtain again draws up on a scene of the interior of the palace, we find Nero still married but not united, to Octavia, Agrippina watching their connexion with a jealousy which frustrates every attempt to draw him into another marriage, while Acte still retains her

Rise of Poppæa  
Sabina.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Antiq. Jud.* xx. 7 3.

place as the reigning favourite. We find the young and gallant Otho still first of the prince's friends and associates, fascinating his master by his graces, and rising in public honours. Nero is now two and twenty instead of seventeen: in other respects we note little change in the personages or situations of the drama. But a new character now steps upon the stage, destined to work out a startling catastrophe. Poppæa Sabina, the wife of Otho, was the fairest woman of her time, and with the charms of beauty she combined the address of an accomplished intriguer.<sup>1</sup> Among the dissolute women of imperial Rome, she stands preëminent. Originally united to Rufius Crispinus, she had allowed herself to be seduced by Otho, and obtained a divorce in order to marry him. Introduced by this new connexion to the intimacy of Nero, she soon aimed at a higher elevation. But her husband was jealous and vigilant, and she herself knew how to allure the young emperor by alternate advances and retreats, till, in the violence of his passion, he put his friend out of the way, by dismissing him to the government of Lusitania.<sup>2</sup> Poppæa suffered Otho to depart without a sigh. She profited by his absence to make herself more than ever indispensable to her paramour, and aimed, with little disguise, at releasing herself from her union and supplanting Octavia, by divorce or even by death.<sup>3</sup>

It seems, however, that this bold design could only be

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 45. (under the year 811): "Huic mulieri cuncta alia fuere præter honestum animum." There are several busts in existence supposed to represent Poppæa; but their authenticity is very questionable. The features are of infantine grace and delicacy, not unsuited to the soft voluptuousness of the habits imputed to her. See Ampère, *Hist. de Rome à Rome*, § 3. But her images, we are told, were generally destroyed at the death of Nero.

<sup>2</sup> The story is somewhat differently told by our authorities, and even by Tacitus himself in his *Histories* and his *Annals*. In the latter work he speaks, no doubt, from his latest and best information, which agrees with the distich in Suetonius (*Otho*, 3.):

"Cur Otho mentito sit, quæritis, exul honore?  
Uxoris mœchus cœperat esse suæ."

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 46., A. D. 58, A. U. 811.



effected by the overthrow of Agrippina. If this woman had recovered a portion of her power over her son, she at least retained little of his affections. To control him by fear was no longer possible; an influence once broken could never be restored on the footing of ancient habit. There was hardly a crime of which she was not reputed guilty; there was no excess of which Rome believed her incapable. Murder and adultery were the common instruments of her ambition: in marrying Claudius she had engaged in an act which popular feeling regarded as incest. Indignant and disgusted at her crimes, her debaucheries, and the crimes and debaucheries of her favourites and creatures, hating her as the sister of Caius, hating her as the wife of Claudius, loathing her as the harlot of Nareissus and Pallas, execrating her at last, in the bitterness of their disappointment, as the vile daughter of their noble Germanicus, her countrymen were prepared to believe the rumour that she had tried, as a last device, to entangle her own son in a criminal intrigue with herself.<sup>1</sup> Some, indeed, whispered that Nero had been the first to solicit his mother; but the other story gained more general credence; no one asked whether a woman of fifty could dream of such a conquest over the fairest charmers of the court, or betray her odious secret to those who watched around her. But so nearly was she successful, they went on to aver, that it was with difficulty her arts were frustrated by Seneca; who deterred Nero from the crime, by representing, from the lips of Acte, the shock it would cause to public feeling, and the dangers which might ensue.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 2. (A. U. 812): "Tradit Cluvius Agrippinam," &c. On the other hand: "Fabius Rusticus non Agrippinæ sed Neroni cupitum id memorat. . . . Sed quæ Cluvius eadem cæteri quoque auctores prodidere, et fama hue inclinat."

<sup>2</sup> The strange story told by Dion (lxi. 11.) seems equivalent to a confession that this scandal was not generally reputed worthy of belief: ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο μὲν, εἴτ' ἀληθὲς ἐγένετο, εἴτε πρὸς τὸν τρόπον αὐτῶν ἐπλάσθη, οἶκ' οἶδα· ἃ δὲ δὴ πρὸς πάντων ὁμολόγηται λέγω, ὅτι ἑταίραν τινὰ τῇ Ἀγριππίνῃ ὁμοίαν ὁ Νέρων εἰς αἰτὸ τοῦτο ἐς τὰ μάλιστα ἠγάπησε, καὶ αὐτῇ τε ἐκείνῃ προσπαίζων, καὶ τοῖς



However this may be, and whether or not Agrippina, the writer of a scandalous chronicle herself, has suffered from the lying tongues of enemies of her own, Poppæa was now engaged with her in open strife, and one or the other must perish in the contest. Poppæa had so far succeeded as to get her lover to contemplate marriage with her, while he still shrank from the preliminary steps. Of Octavia, indeed, neither one nor the other took account. It was Agrippina's anger, Agrippina's power, that Poppæa sought to overcome. She treated Nero as a child controlled by an unreasonable parent; she excited him to rebel against undue authority; made him ashamed of his subservience, and alarmed at the state of dependence in which she represented him as lying. He was no emperor, she said; he was not even a free man. Finally, she persuaded him that his mother was conspiring against him: the charges triumphantly rebutted four years before, were repeated with more success: for Nero began now to feel an interest in believing them, and he had learnt, in the exercise of his power, that it was possible to condemn the suspected without bringing them face to face with their accusers.<sup>1</sup>

Poppæa intrigues against her.

No intrigue of the palace could be supposed complete at this period, unless Seneca was its instigator or accomplice; and accordingly the sage is himself accused of counselling the dreadful crime which has now to be related. The first attempt on Agrippina's life,

Nero contemplates the murder of his mother.

*ἅλλοις ἐνδεικνύμενος, ἔλεγε ὅτι καὶ τῇ μητρὶ ὁμιλοίη.* Lucan, towards the end of his poem, speaks with true Roman indignation of the incest permitted to the Parthians, in which he may possibly have had regard to stories nearer home (viii. 406.):

“Damnat apud gentes sceleris non sponte peracti  
 (Edipodionias infelix fabula Thebas :  
 Parthorum dominus quoties sic sanguine mixto  
 Nascitur Arsacides ! cui fas implere parentem  
 Quid rear esse nefas !”

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 1. Such was the dread in which Nero at this time held his mother, that he entertained thoughts (so at least we are assured) of quitting Rome, divesting himself of power, and returning to a private station at Rhodes. Suet. *Ner.* 34.

as recounted by Tacitus, is one of the darkest scenes of his long tragedy. That it is true in the main, we have at least no reason to question; but Suetonius and Dion have each added details, not wholly consistent with one another, which may serve to remind us that the particulars of such deeds could seldom be accurately known, and how much scope there was for invention and embellishment in the obscurity of contemporary history. Nero, it seems, full of fear or disgust, long avoided all private intercourse with his mother, and recommended her to withdraw to a suburban residence. But this was not enough to reassure him. There was no intention of bringing her to trial: open violence against her could not be ventured: against poison she was guarded by her own caution, and the fidelity of her attendants: the statement that she had fortified herself by antidotes, is one of the vulgar fictions of antiquity, which modern science scarce deigns to refute, yet it is not impossible that she allowed such a rumour to be spread as a measure of precaution. Again, after the mysterious death of Britannicus, a second catastrophe of the kind in the imperial family would have excited terrible suspicions. Among the prince's intimates was one Anicetus, a freedman of the court, but advanced to the command of the fleet at Misenum, who had formerly been his preceptor, and had personal grounds of hostility to Agrippina. This man explained to his eager patron the mechanism by which a vessel might be constructed, to fall in pieces at a given signal in the water. In this Agrippina should be invited to embark; the disruption of the treacherous planks might be imputed to the winds and waves, and then her pious son might erect a temple to his victim, and satisfy the unconscionable world of his dutiful affection.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 3. Suetonius says that the first design was to crush Agrippina under the falling roof of a chamber prepared on shore for the purpose; but that of this Agrippina was forewarned. *Ner.* 34. Dion assures us that Poppæa and Seneca, not Nero, first took the idea of the treacherous ship from some machinery of the kind in the theatre, and applied it to the projected destruction of Agrippina. But this strange mechanism occurs again in

Such a vessel was accordingly prepared, fitted up sumptuously, and assigned for the conveyance of Agrippina from Bauli, where she would land from Antium, to Baiaë, whither she was invited by Nero, at the celebration of the five days' festival of Minerva in the month of March. At this period, the beginning of spring, the fashionable season of the baths began; and Nero pretended to open it with an act of reconciliation with the parent from whom he had been too long estranged. The empress left her own vessel at Bauli, as anticipated, and was received on the beach by Nero; but apprised, as was believed, of some intended treachery, she declined to mount the fatal bark, and insisted on completing the transit to Baiaë in a litter. But there every apprehension was removed by the caresses lavished upon her. The banquet was protracted to a late hour, and when at last Nero took leave of her with the blandest demonstrations of affection, she no longer hesitated to enter the vessel which had been sent to Baiaë to receive her. The weather was fair, the sky brilliant with stars, the gay company of the baths, turning night into day, lingered on the beach as she embarked. There was nothing strange or unusual in such a nocturnal excursion. But no sooner had the rowers put off from shore than the canopy beneath which Agrippina reclined with her ladies gave way under the weight of lead with which it had been loaded, and crushed one of her attendants. At the same instant the bolts were suddenly withdrawn. In the confusion, however, the mechanism failed to act; the sailors tried, by rushing to one side of the vessel, to overturn or sink it, having means at hand to make their own escape. This too was unsuccessful, but Agrippina and her companions were immersed in the water, and one of the women, named Acerronia, hoping to save herself by exclaiming that she was the empress, was beaten with oars and drowned. Agrippina, with more presence of mind, kept silence, and swam, or floated on fragments of the wreck, till

Failure of an  
attempt to de-  
stroy her at sea.

Dion's history (lxxvi. 1.), under the reign of Severus. Reimer refers to a coin of that emperor on which it is represented. See Vaillant, *Num. Imp.* ii. 230.



picked up by boats from the shore; but she too was struck once on the shoulder. Carried to a villa of her own on the banks of the Luerine lake, and now fully conscious of the treachery from which she had so narrowly escaped, she felt in her retreat that the only chance of safety was to pretend entire ignorance of it. Without delay she despatched her freedman Agerinus to Nero, to announce her happy escape from a lamentable accident, to entreat him to calm his own impatience, and defer visiting her till she had tended her wounds, and rested from her fatigues.

Of the failure Nero was already made aware. He had watched the vessel quit the shore of Baïæ: perhaps in the moonlight he had witnessed the catastrophe; at all events, long before the arrival of Agerinus, he was apprised that Agrippina had escaped, wounded, but with life; and he knew too well that she was no longer deceived by his caresses. He believed, in his terror, that she was prepared to arm her slaves, to call upon the soldiers, to appeal to the senate and people against him. Burrhus and Seneca were at hand. Tacitus leaves it uncertain whether, as some believed, they were actually concerned in the plot. His silence may be taken, perhaps, as so far favorable to them. When, however, they came into the prince's presence, and heard his confession of guilt and earnest demand for advice, there was first a long silence; they may have despaired of dissuading; possibly they thought that there now was no alternative: either the son or the mother must perish. At last Seneca turned to Burrhus and asked whether the soldiers should be directed to kill her. Burrhus replied that the soldiers could not be trusted against a daughter of Germanicus: *Let the admiral, he said, be required to fulfil his promise.* . . . . *Be mine the deed,* replied Anicetus; whereupon Nero exclaimed with transport that this was the first day of his Imperium; that he owed the boon to a freedman. When Agerinus presently appeared, Anicetus let a dagger be dropped at his feet, then seized him as an assassin, and loaded

Further machi-  
nations against  
Agrippina.

Complicity of  
Seneca and  
Burrhus.



him with chains ; intending, after the murder of Agrippina, to declare that she had attempted to assassinate the emperor, and, failing in her design, had put an end to her own existence

The Baian palace and the Luerine villa lay perhaps not many furlongs apart, and these incidents, crowded within a narrow space, had all occurred in the course of a

few hours. As soon as Agrippina's disaster was known to the residents of the coast, they rushed

Murder of  
Agrippina ef-  
fected.

to the beach, thronged the moles and terraces and leapt into the boats beneath them, to ascertain what had befallen her. The shore gleamed with innumerable torches, and resounded with cries, and vows, and agitated murmurs. When it was known that she had escaped, the multitude hurried to her place of refuge in a tumult of joy. Arrived at the doors, they found them beset by the armed band of Anicetus. Placing a guard at every entrance, the freedman had made his way into the villa, and required the slaves to lead him into their mistress's presence. There lay the matron on a couch, with a single attendant, by the light of a single lamp, waiting anxiously for her messenger's return. Reassured for a moment by the enthusiasm of the populace, she sickened over the long delay ; and when the cries of the multitude sank into silence, too surely presaged the end which was to follow. The slave herself slipped at last out of the room, and as she exclaimed, *Do you too desert me ?* she beheld Anicetus and his soldiers enter. She had scarce time to bid them return with a favourable account of her health to their master, when one of them struck her on the head with a stick, and the rest rushed upon her, and despatched her with many wounds, she exclaiming only, as she lay prostrate before them, *Strike the womb which bore a monster !*<sup>1</sup>

In this account, says Tacitus, all writers in the main agree. As to what is reported to have followed there was no such general agreement : we may believe it if we will. Perhaps he would wish us to believe, what he dares not himself assert, that Nero came

Brutal be-  
haviour of  
Nero.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 3-8.

in person to examine the corpse of the mangled old woman, and coolly praised its beauty to his attendants.<sup>1</sup> The remains were burnt the same night without ceremony; nor were they even entombed till some of Agrippina's domestics placed the ashes in a decent sepulchre beside the road to Misenum. One of her freedmen, Mnester, slew himself upon it; a token of fidelity which deserves at least to be recorded to her credit. Through a long career of ambition and wickedness she had never blinded herself to the fate which too surely awaited such a position and such schemes as hers. When she consulted the Chaldeans about her son's fortunes, they had warned her that he was destined to reign himself, and then to slay her. *Let him kill me*, she had answered, *let him but reign*.<sup>2</sup>

Then began, if we may believe some writers, the torments of mind which from thenceforth never ceased to gnaw the heart-strings of the matricide: the Furies shook their torches in his face; Agrippina's spectre flitted before him; the trumpet, heard at her midnight obsequies, still blared with ghostly music from the hill of Misenum.<sup>3</sup> However they might falter in their hopes or fears about the future, the ancient moralists clung fondly to the conviction that successful crime meets a sure punishment in this world.<sup>4</sup> We shall read how, many years later, Nero shunned the sight of Athens, as the city of the vengeful Eumenides, and shrank, in conscious guilt, from initiation in the Mysteries; yet, I fear, too much reliance must not be placed on these popular imaginations, for we are informed

Nero attempts to justify himself to the senate.

<sup>1</sup> So also Dion, lxi. 14.: οὐκ ᾔδειν ὅτι οὕτω καλὴν μητέρα εἶχον.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 9.: "Occidat dum imperet."

<sup>3</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 34.: "Sæpe confessus exagitari se materna specie, verberibusque Furiarum ac tædis ardentibus." Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 10.; Dion, l. c.; Stat. *Sylv.* ii. 7. 118.:

"Pallidumque visa  
Matris lampade respicis Neronem."

<sup>4</sup> Juvenal, xiii. 2.:

"Prima est hæc ultio, quod se  
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur."

that he ventured himself to enact the part of Orestes; nor would Lucan have alluded to the fate of Clytæmnestra, had the murder of Agrippina been known to have left a sting in his patron's breast.<sup>1</sup> We are assured, however, and so far no doubt truly, that the first impulse of the selfaccuser, was to fly from the scenes which could not *change their faces like the courtiers to flatter him*, and retire to Naples, from whence he despatched a letter to the senate, composed, as usual, by Seneca, explaining the deed he had perpetrated. This mis-sive asserted that his mother had conspired against his life; that her creature had been found with a weapon in the audience chamber; that, in confusion at the discovery, she had perished by her own hand. *I am scarcely yet assured of my safety*, exclaimed the monster: *It is no satisfaction to me*, he added, *to have escaped*.<sup>2</sup> The disaster in the bay he represented as an accidental shipwreck. He declared, however, that the death of this imperious woman might be accepted, at all events, as a public benefit; and he enumerated her acts of arrogance and ambition, ascribing to her fatal influence many of the worst excesses of Claudius. The explanation bordered too closely on a justification: it was taken as a murderer's confession of guilt, veiled by the ingenuity of a hired advocate. But to put the best face on their master's enormities was recognised as the duty both of the minister and the courtiers. While the senators heaped flatteries and felicitations upon him, they contrived to sell their suffrages for some acts of favour. Some exiles were recalled, particularly noble women; who were said to have suffered through the influence of Agrippina; the ashes of Lollia Paulina were

<sup>1</sup> Lucan, vii. 777.:

“Haud alias, nondum Scythica purgatus in ara,  
Eumenidum vidit vultus Pelopeus Orestes.”

Comp. Suet. *Ner.* 21.; Dion, lxxiii. 22. According to Feuerbach (*der Vatican. Apollo*), the Apollo Belvedere, which may have stood in Nero's villa at Antium, is not the Dragon-slayer, but the Averter of the Furies. Undoubtedly the posture is not that of an archer.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 11. Quintilian quotes from the letter these words: “*Salvum nec esse adhuc nec credo nec gaudeo.*” *Inst. Orat.* viii. 5. 18.



restored to her native country, and a tomb permitted to be raised over them.

Nevertheless, the crime of which the wretched youth was conscious, seemed so far to transcend the worst deeds of the Roman princes, that Nero still apprehended, when reflection returned, a burst of indignation and even violence. The demeanour of his facile nobles reassured him beyond all expectation. Still he hesitated to show himself. His advisers urged him, as his best security, to affect the confidence of innocence. Still trembling, still blushing, he entered Rome in the face of day. Seneca, Burrhus, even the hardy Anicetus, might be amazed at his glowing reception. The senators came forth in their festal robes to meet him: their wives and children were arranged in long rows on either side of the way; the streets were thronged with seats raised against the houses, to accommodate the multitude of spectators as at a triumphal procession. And a triumph indeed it was: Nero had conquered Rome, and now led its people at his chariot-wheels to the Capitol. There he offered thanksgivings to the Gods, and descended again only to fling himself, in insolent security, into every form of monstrous dissipation, from which the last remains of reverence for a mother had hitherto served to withhold him.<sup>1</sup>

So secure, indeed, was the monster of his subjects' servile devotion, that he could now venture to despise the grim raillery with which the populace assailed him; for it was more in jest than indignation that they hung the sack, the instrument of death for parricide, about his statues, placarded the walls with the triad of matricides, *Nero, Orestes, Alcæon, the three men that slew their mothers*, and teased him by pretending to denounce the perpetrators of these offensive ribaldries.<sup>2</sup> A discreet neglect soon caused this

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxi. 16.:

*Νέρων Ὀρέστης, Ἀλκαίων, μητροκτόνοι.*

Comp. Suet. *Ner.* 3.:

“Quis negat *Æneæ* magna de stirpe *Neronem*?  
Sustulit hic matrem, sustulit ille patrem.”



petty annoyance to cease. The current of men's excited imaginations was speedily diverted by the celebration of magnificent games, and the reflections of the jeering populace were turned from their ruler's cruelty to the indecency with which he descended himself upon the stage, and contended in feats of skill with the singers and musicians. Already at an earlier period, in his passion for charioteering, he had erected a circus in his own gardens on the Vatican, and there he had held the whip and reins in the presence of applauding spectators admitted by invitation to his private entertainments. His tutors, it was said, had conceded him this indulgence to keep him from the more heinous impropriety of singing and playing; for he threatened to come forth like Apollo, a Roman, as he remarked, no less than a Grecian divinity, and claim as an honour for himself the admiration which was allowed to be honourable to the Deity. But he would be now no longer thus restricted. He resolved to exhibit himself as an actor; and still shrinking from the reputed enormity, of appearing before promiscuous multitudes on the public stage, he devised a new festival, which he called the Juvenalia, to be held within the precincts of the palace. The prince himself was the hero of this solemnity. Arrived at the age of manhood, his beard was clipped, and the first tender down of his cheek and chin enclosed in a golden casket, and dedicated to Jupiter in the Capitol.<sup>1</sup> This ceremony was followed by music and acting; men of all ranks and in great numbers

Nero gratifies  
the populace  
with shows.

Institution of  
the Juvenalia.

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lxi. 19. There may be some question about the exact period of the institution of the Juvenalia. Tacitus mentions it under the year 812, but he does not expressly state that it was then instituted, for which, however, we have Dion's authority. The ceremony of first cropping the beard was more properly performed in the twentieth year (Suet. *Calig.* 10.); and if Nero was born, as I suppose, in October, 790, this would bring the date to 810 or 811. Suetonius and Dion tell a story, which I reject without hesitation as worthless, that Nero caused his aunt Domitia to be poisoned with a pretended medicine, from mere caprice, because, being sick, she had said she could now die without regret, having lived to see her darling's beard clipped. Hitherto at least Nero's enormities were not without a motive.

were admitted as spectators; illustrious Romans were bribed to exhibit themselves as dancers and singers; grave senators and stately matrons capered in the wanton measures of mercenary buffoons and posture-makers. The degradation to which Nero thus constrained his noblest subjects seems, in the view of the philosophic Tacitus, to deepen the shades which hung over the fame of the matricide. The historian proceeds to describe, as an enhancement of his excesses, the establishment of what we should call a public garden round the basin of Augustus beyond the Tiber, where drinks and viands were distributed to the populace, and all comers, gentle and simple, received a *ticket for refreshments*, which good men exchanged for these vile commodities because they were compelled, the profligate from depraved inclination. Henceforth vice, he says, walked abroad more heinous and more shameless than ever. These promiscuous assemblages of men and women of all ranks together, corrupted the manners of the age more than any cause that could be named.<sup>1</sup>

Last of all, to crown the universal degeneracy, when his people had been sufficiently corrupted, Nero descended himself upon the stage, with the lyre in his hand, which he was seen to tune with nervous solicitude before commencing his performance. His voice was husky, his breath was short, and all the appliances of his art were unavailing to correct their defects.<sup>2</sup> But of this he was much too vain to be conscious. Nevertheless, to silence envious detractors, a troop of soldiers was kept always in attendance, and at their head stood Burrhus himself, disguising the sob of shame with ejaculations of applause. A band of young nobles, entitled Augustani, was enrolled to applaud the performance, to praise the divine beauty of the prince, and the divine excellence of his singing.<sup>3</sup> Doubtless the

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 15.: "Nec ulla moribus corruptis olim plus libidinum circumdedit quam illa colluvies."

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxi. 20.: *Φώνημα βραχὺ καὶ μέλαν*. Lucian, *Neron.* 7.: *Τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ὀλίγον καὶ οὐκ ἀποχρῶν πον δῆ*.

<sup>3</sup> Nero, it seems, had been charmed at Naples by the performance of pro-

verses already quoted from Seneca were frequently in their mouths. Nero himself was a verse maker also. His claims to poetical merit were, as might be expected, meagre, and he so far distrusted himself in this art that he entertained many rhymers about him, whose business it was to catch each pretty turn of phrase or thought that fell from him, and weave it into verse as best they might. *You may trace,* says Tacitus gravely, *in the poems of Nero the manner of their origin: for they flow not, as it were, with a current and inspiration of their own: they have no unity of style or meaning.*<sup>1</sup> In private, Nero, as a philosopher's pupil, affected some interest in philosophical discussions, the common pastime of educated men in his time; and he suffered himself to be attended, after the fashion of the day, by the professed sages of Greece and Rome. It is said however that he had no real sympathy with their pursuits; he enjoyed a boyish gratification in setting them to wrangle together. Agrippina, indeed, is accused of having dissuaded him from the study, as unfit for a king of men.<sup>2</sup> For painting and sculpture, as Grecian arts, he may have acquired the taste of a virtuoso, and the charms of Grecian architecture incited him to magnificence in building.<sup>3</sup> But his true delight was in the shows of the theatre and the circus. In 813 he instituted games called after himself Neronia, to be conducted in the Greek fashion, and to recur periodically like the Olympian.<sup>4</sup> They embraced musical and gymnas-

Institution of  
the Neronia.

fessional *claqueurs* from Alexandria, and made them his model. Suet. *Ner.* 20.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 16.: "Non impetu et instinctu, nec uno ore fluens." Suetonius (*Ner.* 52.) holds that he did compose his verses himself, and appeals to the manuscripts he had seen of them.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 52.

<sup>3</sup> The statues of the Apollo Belvedere, whether it be an original work of Grecian art, or a Roman copy (it seems not yet to be decided whether the material be the marble of Paros or of Carrara), and the Fighting Gladiator, were found in the ruins of Nero's palace at Antium. Of Nero's taste for building I shall speak hereafter. On the subject of the former work, see above, p. 125, n.

<sup>4</sup> Dion, lxi. 21.: Suet. *Ner.*: "Instituit quinquennale certamen primus om-



tic contests, as well as chariot-racing. For games of athletic skill he erected a gymnasium, this designation, as well as the contests themselves, being altogether new to the Romans. It is curious to read in Tacitus how the old-fashioned citizens, still a numerous and respectable body, murmured at the introduction of these foreign customs, which they connected with the reputed profligacy of Grecian morals, and how the rising generation defended them.<sup>1</sup> No page of our author reads more like a declamation of our own day. Nero caused himself to be inscribed on the list of Citharædi, and obtained the prize as the best of lyrists without an antagonist; for all the rest were declared by the judges unworthy even to compete with him. No reward was given for eloquence; but Nero again was pronounced to be the conqueror. The first public display of Lucan's poetical genius was made on this occasion; when he came forward to sing the praises of the prince who had made him his companion and assistant.<sup>2</sup> On the whole the first celebration of the Neronia was dignified and imposing; for the low buffoonery of the histrions, the favourites of the baser sort, was excluded from this Hellenic festival. It was remarked that from this time the Greek fashions, long denizenized in Naples and the cities of Campania, obtained more and more favour with the Roman voluptuaries; the loose Greek robes in which the spectators were enjoined to array themselves, to favour the illusion of the spectacle, were retained in common use, and displaced, in spite of the sneer of Augustus, the toga of the world's masters.<sup>3</sup>

nium Romæ." According to Eckhel (*Doctr. Numm.* vi. 264.) these games continued to be repeated as late as the time of Constantine.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 21, 22. The contempt of the Romans for the gymnastic entertainments of Greece is marked by Lucan, vii. 270.:

"Graiiis delecta iuventus

Gymnasiis aderit, studioque ignava palæstræ."

<sup>2</sup> Suetonius, *vit. Lucan.*

<sup>3</sup> Tac. l. c. The chlamys, a loose and short cloak, and crepis, a kind of sandal, were distinctive articles of Grecian costume, already much in use among the Roman sojourners at the Greek cities of Italy. See note of Lipsius on Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 21.



Our authorities, especially Suetonius and Dion, abound in details of the grandeur and extravagance of the shows with which Nero astonished his people, more particularly on the occasion of celebrating the Ludi Maximi, as he styled them, for the eternity of the Roman Empire. The most remarkable of these exhibitions was perhaps that of an elephant which descended from the cornice of the amphitheatre to the arena upon the tight rope,—it does not appear how it first reached that elevation,—with a Roman knight on his back. The distribution of precious objects,—gold, jewels, tissues, pictures, animals, and finally ships, houses, and estates,—exceeded the wanton liberality of Caius. Nero followed the Roman tradition in constructing an amphitheatre for the display of his own elegant spectacles;<sup>1</sup> but he amazed and mortified them by excluding, in the spirit of Greek humanity, the combats of gladiators, and by refusing to sacrifice the life even of condemned criminals. Yet his scruples were those of the man of art, rather than the man of feeling. His Roman entertainments were served after the bloodier fashion of his own countrymen. In the course of his reign he is said to have produced not less than five hundred senators and six hundred knights arrayed for combat, though evidently their contests were not meant to be mortal. While the populace exulted in the descent of their magnates into the arena, Nero himself was better pleased when he prevailed on them to compete on the stage in music, and reduced what at other times had been an occasional sally of vanity to a regular practice. Foreign spectators were more affected than either the prince or his people, at beholding beneath their feet a Paulus, a Mummius, a Scipio, and a Marcellus, whose fathers' trophies were still conspicuous in the streets, whose fathers' halls and temples

Increasing extravagance of the shows.  
The Ludi Maximi.

<sup>1</sup> The theatres adapted to scenic representations, in which the Greeks were content to exhibit such spectacles, were incapable, of course, of receiving the crowds of the great metropolis; but Nero, like many great builders before him, was content with a temporary edifice of wood.

were the proudest monuments of the city.<sup>1</sup> Nero was the first of the emperors who seems, with some emotions of sensibility, to have been wholly devoid of national prejudices. Coarse and unamiable as the national feeling of the Romans was, the world had no better security against wanton and unmitigated tyranny.

We have now reached a period when the chief of the Roman state, the representative of its most illustrious families, is found altogether insensible to the principles which had carried her in triumph through every combination of foreign and domestic peril.

Nero's insensibility to national feeling.

The announcement of such a fact may induce us to pause in our narrative, and estimate, as we best may, the circumstances of the times which made such a phenomenon possible. Was the gay and thoughtless, but instructed and accomplished, prince before us the impersonation of the general feeling, or an exception to it? He was partly both. His want of sympathy with antiquity is to be ascribed partly to his education, which was exceptional, partly also to his position, in which he represented the lowest class of citizens, and re-

The result of his education in the principles of the Stoic philosophy.

flected their temper and instincts. The teaching of Seneca, which drew all its interest from the Greek philosophy, was alien from the old Roman sentiments. His doctrines were essentially cosmopolite. He sought to refer questions of honour and justice to general and eternal principles, rather than solve them by the test of precedents and political traditions. The educated men of the later Republic, as well as of the early Empire, had opened their arms wide to embrace these foreign speculations; and whether they had resigned themselves to Epicurism, as was the fashion under Julius and Augustus, or had cultivated Stoicism, which was now more generally in vogue,

<sup>1</sup> Suct. *Ner.* 12.; Dion, lxi. 17.: Καὶ ἐδακτυλοδείκτου γε αὐτοὺς ἀλλήλοις, καὶ ἐπέλεγον, Μακεδόνες μὲν, οὐτός ἐστιν ὁ τοῦ Παύλου ἐκγοννος· Ἕλληνες δὲ, οὗτος τοῦ Μομμίου· Σικελιώται, ἴδετε τὸν Κλαύδιον· Ἑπειρῶται, ἴδετε τὸν Ἀππίον· Ἀσιανοὶ, τὸν Δούκιον· Ἰβηρες, τὸν Πούπλιον· Καρχηδόνοι, Ἀφρικανόν· Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ πάντας.

they equally abandoned the ground of their unpolished fathers, which asserted the pre-eminence of patriotism above all the virtues, the subordination of every claim of right and duty to national interest and honour. But men cannot rule the world in the same spirit in which they conquer it. Humanity in its widest sense, as sympathy with man, follows, by the condition of our nature, on the sense of ease and security. We shall presently see, indeed, the Roman Stoics suddenly awaking from this dream of philanthropy, and flinging themselves again, with passionate disappointment, upon the narrower interests which constituted the strength of their fathers; trying indeed, but feebly and with no consistency, to connect the duties of the Roman with the universal spirit of rectitude and holiness. But as yet, Stoicism, in the ranks of Roman society, was merely a speculative creed; and the habit now prevalent there, of speculating on the unity of mankind, the equality of races, the universality of justice, the subjection of prince and people, of masters and slaves, of conqueror and conquered, to one rule of Right, tended undoubtedly to sap the exclusive and selfish spirit of Roman antiquity.

It was by his position, however, at the head of the dissolute democracy of Rome, that Nero was taught more especially to divest himself of the ideas and motives which seemed to become the offspring of the Domitii and the Julii. The eminence, indeed, to which he was born might itself preclude him from ever imbibing them. The men by whom his infancy had been surrounded were slaves and freedmen, chiefly of Greek extraction, men whose lessons of life and manners were pointed doubtless with many a gibe at the decrepitude of Latium and Sabellia, with proud laudation of the genius of Hellenic culture, which had survived so many conquests and captivities, and laid its invisible yoke on the necks of the world's masters. The society of the palace displayed, in striking colours, the intellectual superiority of the Greeks; and Nero was led, by all his early tuition, to regard intellectual polish as the true end of civilization. But the em-

2d. Of his position at the head of the Roman democracy.



peror, moreover, was the representative of the Roman populace; of that hybrid multitude of the circus and the baths, which owed no fealty to the traditions of the forum and the camp. These were the natural supporters of his tribunitian power, while the nobles, the true blood of Rome, might be regarded as his hereditary enemies. Even the names of his predecessors, Tiberius and Caius, might remind him of the tribunes of two centuries before, the champions of the plebs against the optimates. We may almost imagine, that in this prevalence of personal over family appellations, there lingered yet a reminiscence of the popularity of the Gracchi.<sup>1</sup>

It would appear, indeed, that while the nobles had no cause of quarrel against their prince, but for the offence he may have given to antique prejudices, they allowed themselves to reflect on his character and administration in terms that could not fail to make a breach between them. Scandalous as the vices and the amusements of Nero had now become, monstrous as were the crimes he had perpetrated within the sphere of his own family, his government was still conducted on wholesome principles, the co-ordinate powers of the state flourished under his tolerant protection, the magistrates were held in honour, the senate bore something more than the mere semblance of authority. The state was prosperous, the laws were respected, public criminals were punished, virtue and moderation were recognised as claims to reward. Under such circumstances, the canker of internal corruption, the absence of high principles, might be concealed from the eyes of ordinary observers; and it may be doubted whether all the philosophy of Rome could furnish one man wise enough to look beneath the surface, and detect the symptoms of national decay which really lurked there. The instincts of Christianity alone could

Nero's temperate proceedings in cases of Majesty and libel.

<sup>1</sup> The indignant allusion of Lucan to the Drusi and Gracchi, and to the supposed exultation of their shades at the success of the Cæsarean usurpation, is not uninteresting (*Phars.* vi. in fin.):

“Vidi ego lætantes, popularia nomina, Drusos;  
Legibus immodicos, ausosque ingentia Gracchos.”



indicate the disease, at the same time that they afforded the remedy. We must allow, then, that justice as well as prudence should have repressed the selfish jealousy of the nobles; and taught them at least to tolerate the ruler who deserved well of the republic. But it would seem that they had no such self-control. In the year 815, the turning point, as it is commonly regarded, of Nero's public administration, a prætor named Antistius, who already, as tribune of the plebs, had shown little disposition to confine himself within the limits of his functions, thought fit to compose verses against the emperor, and to recite them in a company of knights and senators. The law of Majesty, under which such indecent raillery would have met with speedy punishment, had been set aside: Nero piqued himself on his generous discouragement of the informers. But the flatterers of power were ever prompt to seize an opportunity for courting it. It was easy to represent that the safety of the prince required protection to his dignity. A few years only of exemption from the shame and peril of delation had sufficed to blunt the sense of its enormities, and the demand now made by the courtly Capito for reviving of charges of Majesty, seems to have been hailed by all with blind precipitation. The senate assented without serious opposition from any of its members. But Capito required, further, that the action of the law should be retrospective. The ribaldry of Antistius, he protested, was not only shocking, but dangerous. The safety of the state, not of the emperor only, required an example to be made. The stretch of legal principle for his punishment was well deserved; and it was for once only. Many acquiesced in these violent proceedings, so at least they pretended, to give the prince an opportunity of gracefully absolving his maligner by the exercise of the tribunitian veto. A consul designate, inspired by this refined notion of flattery, proposed that the culprit should be stripped of his prætorship and scourged to death, after the ancient manner. The senators ratified the outrageous sentence with headlong ardour; but Pætus Thrasea alone, one of the few honest men among them, re-

fused to concur in it, and while he tempered his vote with much praise of the emperor, and invectives against his defamer, invoked the milder punishment of exile with confiscation. This temperate counsel had a great effect on the impulsive assembly, ever prone, as we have seen, to the most sudden conversions, and devoid, it would seem, of those convictions and principles, the possession of which is among the most essential qualities of a deliberative body. It was determined to proceed no further without first ascertaining the emperor's real wishes; and this precipitate flattery ended in placing him in the disagreeable position of deciding as a judge on a question of his own personal dignity. Nero hastened to refer the affair again to the senate, not omitting, however, to claim some credit for allowing it to absolve the criminal. After some further discussion, Thræsea's firmness prevailed; and the senators generally acquiesced in his vote for the minor punishment.<sup>1</sup> Patient as the emperor had shown himself in the case of a libel against his own person, he bore, as might be expected, with equal composure, the publication of scandalous writings against the senate. When a certain Fabricius Veiento was accused of putting forth offensive libels against the fathers and the pontiffs, Nero, to whom the cognisance of the charge was referred by appeal, again declined to interfere. It was not till a fresh indictment was presented against the culprit, and he was declared to have trenched on the imperial prerogatives, and even to have sold magistracies and other appointments, that the chief of the state could be induced to summon him before his tribunal. Veiento was banished from Italy; his books, the original subject of complaint, were ordered to be burnt, and it was declared criminal to read or possess them. As long as this interdiction lay upon them they were sought for with ardour; but when it was shortly afterwards removed, they soon ceased to attract curiosity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 48. For the turbulent character of this man, called elsewhere (*Ann.* xiii. 53.; xvi. 10.) L. Vetus, see xiii. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 50.: "Conquisitos lectitatosque, donec cum periculo parabantur, mox licentia habendi oblivionem attulit."

To those who, with the bitter experience of past years, foresaw that the first step, however hesitating, in the direction of tyranny, must rapidly lead to a revival of its pristine terrors, even these indications of imperial jealousy might serve as a warning. But the young Cæsar's progress in dissipation and expense gave nearer cause for apprehension. The wasteful extravagance of his first eight years could not have been maintained with pure hands, had he not found in the coffers of his predecessor the accumulated treasures of a reign of carefulness and moderation. Though no friendly voice has deigned to signalize the economy of Claudius, this fact seems alone sufficient to establish it, and to add another to the various circumstances which impugn the common notion of his imbecility, and the unchecked rapacity of his ministers. But the descent from dissipation to extravagance, from extravagance to want, from want to violence and tyranny, was inevitable. It could only be a question of time. The profusion of the prince would surely grow with indulgence; his treasury must stand always empty, and unlimited power would not long be baulked of the means of replenishing it. Such was the gloomy prospect before the nobles, when, the first to apprehend as the first to feel the tyranny of their autocrat, they saw with dismay the death of Burrhus and the removal therewith of the strongest bulwark against the encroachments of unthrifty despotism. Rumours of poison were whispered among them, and symptoms were reported which gave colour to the suspicion. Nero, it was related, had repeatedly come to the sick man's bedside, to inquire after his health; but he could extort from him no thanks for this solicitude, no frank avowal of his sufferings, but only the dry answer, *I am doing well*.<sup>1</sup> But, however this may be, neither symptoms nor rumours had so much effect on the general belief as the apprehensions excited by the character of the personages between whom Nero divided the military command which had reposed in the hands

Death of Burrhus ascribed to poison.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 51.



of Burrhus. Fenius Rufus was timid and indolent, ready to please either prince or people by any base acquiescence: but the wickedness of Tigellinus was more active; already infamous as the partner of his master's debaucheries, he became the worst adviser of his tyranny, and the willing instrument of his cruelties.<sup>1</sup> Such were the ministers to whom Nero instinctively resorted, a bad man and a weak man; the one to contrive crimes, the other to sanction them. And at this moment he might have a special motive for ridding himself of a brave and honest adviser; for he was meditating a divorce from Octavia, which Burrhus sturdily opposed as unjust and impolitic. When urged by the emperor to accede to it, he had bluntly replied (such at least was the reply the Romans delighted to ascribe to him): *If you dismiss the daughter of Claudius, restore at least the empire which was her dowry.*<sup>2</sup>

The death of Burrhus helped to break down the influence of Seneca also. This result, however, flowed in a great measure from the blind jealousy of the nobles themselves. It was natural that they should regard Seneca as an upstart the provincial, the sophist, the son of the grammarian: they might cavil at the liberality of his views, and impugn his influence as pernicious. From them, probably, came the accusations which were now heaped on the surviving guardian of Nero's innocence, and which Nero showed himself little anxious to baffle. The riches Seneca had acquired were imputed to him as a crime; it was insinuated that the frugal sage had amassed them to hatch treason and corrupt the populace. It was pretended moreover that he vaunted himself the prince's master in eloquence and

Seneca attempts to withdraw from public life.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. l. c. Dion, lxii. 13. This seems to have been the first occasion of dividing the prefecture between two, the plan recommended by Mæcenas according to Dion (lii. 24.): τῶν δὲ δὴ ἱππέων δύο τοὺς ἀρίστους τῆς περὶ σε φρουρᾶς ἀρχειν.

<sup>2</sup> Both Dion and Suetonius ascribe the death of Burrhus more confidently to poison. The former writer remarks the rude freedom of speech in which the prefect indulged (lxii. 13.).



poetry, disparaging at the same time the excellence he could not hope to rival in music and charioteering. Nero's petty and vindictive spirit was an instrument easily played upon. Seneca was not blind to the shy consciousness which shunned his presence. Fear and habit alone continued to preserve his life. Now was the time to take the course which he had long meditated, as the means of escaping from danger. He pleaded age and ill health, and demanded leave to withdraw from court; at the same time he offered to relinquish the wealth which rendered him, as he knew, most obnoxious. Such tokens of distrust alarmed Nero. He set himself to caress and cajole; his blandishments were fascinating, but his entreaties were in fact commands; and Seneca found his escape cut off, without being for a moment deceived as to the imminence of his peril. Muttering to himself or his friends the wisest maxims of his school, he renounced all outward show, either of wealth or influence, and pretended to devote himself more earnestly than ever to philosophic abstraction.<sup>1</sup>

Although the ostensible authority over the prætorians might be divided between Rufus and Tigellinus, it was not long before the entire confidence of the emperor was given to a single favourite. Rufus, indeed, Fatal influence of Tigellinus. owed his elevation primarily to the good-will of the populace, to whom he was endeared by the liberality in dispensing their dole of grain without making a profit himself; he had also been admitted to the friendship of Agrippina; and on both these accounts became an object of suspicion to Nero. But his colleague, a man of obscure birth and of no pretensions to distinction or popularity, was better fitted to obtain a tyrant's confidence. This confidence once acquired he sought successfully to keep by humouring the prince's passions, and plunging him into crimes on the plea of safety and necessity.

The first victims to this man's intrigues were Plautus and

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 53-56. The fears of Seneca and the artifices of Nero are set forth in a dialogue between them. Our dramatic fabulist never wears the historian's veil more loosely than in this scene, which assuredly was never acted, and still less could have been reported.

Sulla, personages of high rank and consideration, of whom Nero, as the favourite knew, was painfully jealous. Execution of Rubellius Plautus and Cornelius Sulla. Rubellius Plautus, whose relation to the imperial family has been before noticed, was generally respected for his character; his name was connected accordingly with the plot which Silana had ventured to impute to Agrippina; and recently on the appearance of a comet which was supposed to portend the fall of the reigning prince, it was to him that they had turned their eyes as the fittest and most natural successor.<sup>1</sup> Nero had recommended his kinsman to remove from Rome to his estates in Asia; and here Plautus had resided since 813 with his wife and a modest retinue of slaves, abstaining from all participation in affairs. Still Nero watched him with anxiety, while Tigellinus continued to insist upon the birth, the wealth, and the reputation of the exile, and the proximity of his retreat to the armies of Syria. It was determined in secret conclave that his life should be taken, and for this purpose a centurion with sixty soldiers, under the orders of an eunuch of the palace, was despatched from Rome. Sulla, meanwhile, had been removed to Massilia: he was poor while Plautus was rich; he was despicable in character, while Plautus was highly esteemed; but the nobility of his descent and the name of the great dictator could be objected against him, and the Germanic legions, it was thought, might possibly attach themselves to him. Such were the alarms of the unwarlike stripling, who kept a handful of guards in his service only by largesses and caresses.<sup>2</sup> Sulla's fate was soon decided. It required but

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 19. xiv. 22.: "Quasi jam depulso Nerone, quisnam deligaretur anquirebant; et omnium ore Rubellius Plautus celebrabatur."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 57.: "Propinquos huic Orientis, illi Germaniæ exercitus . . . erectas Gallias ad nomen dictatorium." The Narbonensis, as has been remarked more than once in the course of this history, was closely connected with the old senatorial party under Pompeius, Domitius, and Fonteius. It is curious to find this connexion again referred to, after all the pains the Cæsars had taken to undo it. It is not impossible that the democratic emperor may have been reminded of it by the recent attempt of Gætulicus to assert his independence in that quarter.

six days for Nero's myrmidons to reach the coast of Gaul, and the exile was already slain and his head brought to the emperor, while the murderers of Plautus were still on their journey. As soon as it was known in the city that this precious life was also in danger, some of his kinsmen hastened to advertise him, and their warnings, with exhortations to resist and dare the worst, reached him before the messengers of death arrived. It seems strange, indeed, that the victim should have made no effort to escape or to resist.<sup>1</sup> All Asia lay before him for flight: the legions of the East were commanded by Corbulo, whose fame made him odious to the emperor. But Plautus was unmoved: whether he despaired of escaping or defending himself, or was actually weary of the suspense of his position, or whether he hoped by submission to avert the confiscation of his patrimony, he calmly pursued his exercises and studies, and was found at last by his assassins unrobed for the games of the palæstra. The eunuch looked on while the centurion struck the victim's head off. When the trophy was brought to Rome, Nero is said to have exclaimed, that he was now free to effect his marriage with Poppæa, without fear of a rival to profit by the public commiseration for Octavia. But he pretended to be delivered from two dangerous adversaries, and required the senate to congratulate him, and decree a thanksgiving for the state preserved and a revolution averted.<sup>2</sup>

Thus at the close of the eighth year of his principate did Nero exhibit himself, almost without disguise, as a vulgar tyrant, timid and sanguinary, cutting off one by one the most

<sup>1</sup> Many of my readers will remember Gibbon's remark, and the striking note appended to it: "To resist was fatal; and it was impossible to fly. . . . Under Tiberius a Roman knight attempted to fly to the Parthians. He was stopped in the straits of Sicily; but so little danger did there appear in the example that the most jealous of tyrants disdained to punish it." See Tac. *Ann.* vi. 14. Nevertheless the explanation must be felt to be unsatisfactory. I can only refer, in addition, 1. to the gross apathy with regard to death in which the Romans were now generally sunk; and 2. to their singular abhorrence of exile among strangers.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 57-59.



Further development of Nero's cruelty.

eminent around him in station or virtue. From this time no senator could fail to see that his own life hung only on the caprice of a master, and of the creatures who surrounded him. It was impossible for him to impose on himself, any more than on the prince, by the abject servility of his adulation. Yet having once devoted himself to soothing the monster by caresses, all his moral courage deserted him; condemned by his own conscience, he had no prop to lean on; there seemed no other course for him but to repeat and daily increase the dose of flattery, to crouch more obsequiously under every act of cruelty and oppression; only to hope that his own turn of suffering might come the last. Seneca's influence was gone. It is some satisfaction to believe that the crimes which followed were neither suggested nor excused by this preacher of expediency; and we may hope that, at last, when his doctrines were reprov'd by the result, he learnt to detest the subterfuges under which he had sheltered his own dereliction from honesty and virtue. The tyrant's passions now ranged unrestrained. The crime he had long prepared was about to be consummated. To the child-wife to whom he was united, he never felt nor pretended attachment. Their cohabitation

Fall of Octavia.

had been brief and barren. Octavia was too artless to raise any obstacle to his licentious amours. Yet, as the daughter of Messalina, even her existence would remind him of the crimes which had raised him to power; as the child of Claudius, the people, with their usual caprice, might lavish upon her the favour they had withheld from her father. To these obvious motives for jealousy was added the fierce ambition of Poppæa, who demanded of her lover the last proof of his devotion. Still some pretext was necessary, and the barrenness of the deserted wife was alleged as a reason for repudiating her. She was required to remove from the palace; but at the same time the house of Burrhus and the estates of Plautus were, with a show of liberality, assigned to her. The marriage with Poppæa followed only twelve days later. The intruder was now in a position to destroy



the victim she had injured. She contrived an accusation against her of adultery with a slave ; her maids were tortured to extort evidence of her guilt ; and Tigellinus paid court to the reigning favourite by presiding at the foul examination. Well did he earn the scathing sarcasm which clings like the shirt of Nessus to his name.<sup>1</sup> Yet the pretended revelations thus odiously obtained hardly gave a colour to the harsh measure of sending her to a place of custody in Campania ; and when the populace, excited by such great and unmerited misfortunes, murmured against the decree, Nero found it necessary to recall her. Thereupon the citizens rushed tumultuously to the Capitol, to sacrifice to the national divinities ; they overthrew all the statues of Poppæa within their reach, while they crowned Octavia's with flowers. They crowded about the palace, and filled its courts : the emperor dispersed them with a military force, and replaced the images of his paramour. Yet he dared not persist in this defiance : trembling and irresolute, he neither dared to retain Poppæa in the palace, nor could he determine to restore Octavia to her place and rights. If, while still absent in Campania, her name alone sufficed to raise a tumult, what, he asked, might be the effect of her actual return to the city ? But the charges hitherto made against her had failed of reasonable proof : even if proved, an intrigue with a slave deserved, in Roman eyes, neither the name nor punishment of treason. Another charge must be invented, another connexion, more capable of such an imputation, must be fabricated. Nero had long loathed the sight of Anicetus, the contriver of his mother's murder. Strange to relate, he induced him, by extraordinary promises, to avow an amour with the wretched princess. For the present he must be banished, for appearance' sake, to an island ; but he should reap ample rewards at a later period. This confession was enough. A charge not of adultery, but of Majesty, was founded upon it ; for the captain of the fleet was capable of guilty aspirations ; and, with additional in-

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 60. Dion, lii. 13.

Her banishment.

sults to her outraged innocence, Octavia was imprisoned in Pandateria. Familiar as the Romans had now become with the banishment of grave and noble matrons, they were not insensible to the cruel aggravations of her lot. The Cæsarean princesses who had thus suffered before her, the Julias and Agrippinas, had at least attained the strength and fortitude of mature years; *they had seen some happy days*; they had the consolation, for such it was regarded in the creed of Paganism, of reflecting in their sorrow that they had had a portion, at least, of the common enjoyments of life. But to Octavia her marriage had been no other than a funeral: led as she was to a house where everything was funereal and fatal; where her father, and soon afterwards her brother, had been poisoned; where a maid had become more powerful than her mistress; where a paramour had supplanted the lawful spouse; lastly, where she had been branded with a crime more hateful to her than the worst of deaths.<sup>1</sup>

Her death.

The poor child had not yet attained her twentieth birthday, when, encompassed by soldiers and centurions, she augured too surely that the days of her existence were numbered. Still clinging with agony to life, she proclaimed in vain that she was now no more than Cæsar's widow, no more than his sister, and invoked the names of their common kindred, the offspring of Germanicus, the name of Agrippina herself, during whose power her union, if unhappy, had at least been protected. After a few days she was seized and bound, and her veins opened with the knife; she fainted, and the blood refused to flow; she was finally stifled by the fumes of a warm bath. Her head was severed from her body, and carried to the cruel Poppæa. Vows and sacrifices were offered to the gods by a decree of the senate; and so, says the historian, we are henceforth

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 63.: "Nuptiarum dies loco funeris fuit, deductæ in domum in qua nihil nisi luctuosum haberet, erepto per venenum patre et statim fratre: tum ancilla domina validior; et Poppæa non nisi in perniciem uxoris nupta: postremo crimen omni exitio gravius."

to understand, without special mention, that whenever any atrocious barbarity was perpetrated by the emperor, the triumph of his personal selfishness was celebrated with the same ceremonies as had once signalized the victories of the Roman people.

Nero had now cleared away all partners or rivals of his power in his own family. He remained alone, the last of a race which he was not destined to perpetuate. Nevertheless, his causes of apprehension were not removed by these hideous massacres. He had exchanged the jealousy of a kinsman for the enmity of the whole world. He turned from nobler victims to the vain and wealthy freedmen of his own household. Doryphorus, the secretary of the palace, was put to death for the opposition he had pre-

Prosecution of wealthy freedmen, Doryphorus and Pallas.

sumed to offer to the nuptials of Poppæa; unless, indeed, the riches he had amassed in the imperial service were the real cause of his destruction, as of that of Pallas, for whose natural death, aged as he now was, the prince was tired of waiting.<sup>1</sup> The wealth of Seneca, also, for he still had the reputation of wealth, tempted Nero's cupidity; and he listened eagerly to accusations of conspiracy which the flatterers of power contrived to forge against the fallen minister. But the charge against him in connexion with the illustrious Piso was at least premature; it was triumphantly rebutted, and the prince acquiesced

Charge against Seneca rebutted.

reluctantly in his escape for a season. The man of peace was provoked at last to self-defence. Piso, awakened to his danger, embarked soon afterwards in a real conspiracy, and we shall have reason to suspect that Seneca himself was not unconnected with that formidable enterprise.<sup>2</sup>

The prodigality of the emperor's pastimes was thus driving him to the sanguinary measures by which tyrants fill their coffers; and the discovery how easy was the process, how submissive were the victims, prompted him to indulge his passions without restraint. His licentiousness became

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



now as reckless as his cruelty. He had sunk already to the degradation of singing and playing in public; but there was still a lower depth which his abandoned tastes and thirst for vulgar admiration tempted him to fathom. As a child his talk had been of the Greens and Blues; his counters had been cars of ivory. The passion, checked by his preceptors, had been cherished up to manhood, and since he had become his own master he had thrown off gradually all restraint in indulging it. From his private circus in the gardens of the Vatican, from the arena of Grecian colonies in Campania, he descended at last to the Circus Maximus at Rome, and, placing a freedman in the imperial tribune to fling the kerchief for a signal, drove his chariot victoriously round the goal, before the eyes of 200,000 citizens. The rabble greeted him with delight; so soon had they forgotten their sympathy with Octavia; so heedless were they of the shame of their country. The senators clapped their hands reluctantly, shuddering the while at the downfall of ancient principles, and trembling at every shout for their own lives and fortunes.<sup>1</sup>

Nero drives his chariot in the Circus Maximus.

Nero had proposed at this period to visit Greece and Egypt, but, when he renounced this intention, he assigned as a reason his people's wish to retain him among them as the leader of all their amusements. Possibly they apprehended,—so completely did they now regard the emperor's presence as the pledge of their subsistence,—that in his absence the regular supplies of the city would be impeded or withheld.<sup>2</sup> It was this general conviction of the necessity of the Prince to the Subject, that assured him of their protection, and made him so formidable to the helpless senate. To attempt the life of Cæsar, tyrant and monster though he might be, was

Nero's presence at Rome desired both by the populace and the senate.

A. D. 63.

A. U. 816.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 22. The date of this odious exhibition cannot be fixed precisely. It must have been later than the institution of the Neronia in 813, and before 817, from an anecdote in Tacitus. (*Ann.* xv. 44.)

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 36.: "Talia plebi voluntia fuere, voluptatum, cupidine, et quæ præcipua cura est, rei frumentariæ augustias, si abesset, metuenti."



an outrage on the lives and fortunes of the people whose existence was bound up with his. Distracted by apprehensions on either side, the senators knew not whether to wish for their master's absence or his presence among them; but in Rome he was at least the guardian of public tranquillity, and this tranquillity, by his name, his guards, or his largesses, he contrived successfully to maintain.

Never, on the other hand, were the citizens so good-humoured, as when they saw their prince-enjoying himself among them. The prince too, on his part, wished it to appear that he was never so happy as when exhibiting his private pleasures to the eyes of his people. The banquets he gave were no longer to be hidden in the recesses of the palace. In the Campus Martius, in the Circus Maximus, in the theatres and other open places, a series of entertainments rapidly followed: and not here only, but in every public spot in the city, the emperor's table was spread from day to day, and all the world was welcome to see him dine, if not to partake of his dinner. Nor were gluttony and drinking the only intemperance he thus shamelessly practised and more shamelessly displayed. To such degradation had he reduced the citizens, that they were not offended by the most naked exhibitions of wantonness. Whatever allowance we may make for the indignant exaggerations of later moralists, or for the prurient imaginations of the narrators, it seems impossible to question the fact of the prostitution he encouraged, ordered, and even compelled. To Tigellinus was ascribed the most monstrous of all his inventions. On one occasion, a table was spread for the emperor and his guests on a raft in the Basin of Agrippa, and numerous vessels, decked with gold, silver, and ivory, attended with the materials and ministers of the repast. The colonnades which encircled the water were filled partly with invited spectators; but certain places were reserved for women of all ranks, even for matrons and virgins, who were surrendered to them without reserve. Finally, one day Nero, who had already thrown off all restraints of decency and

Infamous debauchery publicly encouraged by Nero.

self-respect in his own person, went through the marriage ceremony, arrayed in veil, necklace, and girdle, before the priests and soothsayers, with the vilest of his male associates.<sup>1</sup>

Let this suffice:—such things have occurred, perhaps, in other times and other places; perhaps they have been recorded by historians as well as satirists: but the foul annals of the period before us have attained an unfortunate distinction from the genius which has been engaged in illustrating them. While the world endures, the iniquities of Nero will retain their pre-eminence in infamy, and it will be equally impossible to recount them at length, or to pass them over in silence.

But in the midst of these horrors, which steeped in the same fearful guilt the people and the prince together, Providence was preparing an awful chastisement; and was about to overwhelm Rome, like the Cities of the Plain, in a sheet of retributive fire. Crowded, as the mass of the citizens were, in their close wooden dwelling-chambers, accidents were constantly occurring which involved whole streets and quarters of the city in wide-spreading conflagrations, and the efforts of the night-watch to stem these outbursts of fire, with few of the appliances, and little perhaps even of the discipline, of our modern police, were but imperfectly effectual. But the greatest of all the fires which desolated Rome was that which broke out on the 19th of July, in the year 817, the tenth of Nero, which began at the eastern end of the Circus, abutting on the valley between the Palatine and the Cælian hills.<sup>2</sup> Against the outer

Great conflagration in Rome.

<sup>1</sup> The reader may compare for himself Tac. *Ann.* xv. 37.; Suet. *Ner.* 27–29.; Dion, lxii. 15. It is not worth while to point out some apparent discrepancies, or suggest possible exaggerations, especially in Dion's account: καὶ ἦν ἐξουσία παντὶ τῷ βουλευμένῳ σχεῖν ἣν ἠθελεν· οὐ γὰρ ἐξῆν αὐτοῖς οὐδ' ἓνα ἀπαρνήσασθαι: which is followed by a trait of nature which redeems it from utter incredibility: ὠθισμοὶ τε καὶ πληγαὶ καὶ θόρυβοι . . . καὶ ἄνδρες τε ἐκ τούτων συχνοὶ ἐφθάρησαν. Modern writers, as usual, have taken the most unfavourable view, and have supposed the entertainment in Agrippa's Basin to have been open to all the world.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 38.: "Initium in ea parte Circi ortum quæ Palatino Cælio.

walls of this edifice leaned a mass of wooden booths and stores filled chiefly with combustible articles. The wind from the east drove the flames towards the corner of the Palatine, whence they forked in two directions, following the draught of the valleys. At neither point were they encountered by the massive masonry of halls or temples, till they had gained such head, that the mere intensity of the heat crumbled brick and stone like paper. The Circus itself was filled from end to end with wooden galleries, along which the fire coursed with a speed which defied all check and pursuit. The flames shot up to the heights adjacent, and swept the basements of many noble structures on the Palatine and Aventine. Again they plunged into the lowest levels of the city, the dense habitations and narrow winding streets of the Velabrum and Forum Boarium, till stopped by the river and the walls. At the same time another torrent rushed towards the Velia and the Esquiline, and sucked up all the dwellings within its reach, till it was finally arrested by the cliffs beneath the gardens of Mæcenas. Amidst the horror and confusion of the scene, the smoke, the blaze, the din, and the scorching heat, with half the population, bond and free, cast loose and houseless into the streets, ruffians were seen to thrust blazing brands into the buildings, who affirmed, when seized by the indignant sufferers, that they were acting with orders; and the crime, which was probably the desperate resource of slaves and robbers, was imputed by fierce suspicions to the government itself.<sup>1</sup>

que montibus contigua est . . . simul cœptus ignis . . . longitudinem Circi corripuit." In the second clause the word Circus evidently means the edifice so called, and, accordingly, I give the same interpretation to it in the first. But no part of the Circus can properly be said to adjoin the Palatine *and* the Cælian; and I think it possible that in the first passage Tacitus means, not the building, but the quarter of the city which went by the name of Circus Maximus. Dion Hal. (iii. 68.) describes the Circus and its exterior galleries: *ἐξῶθεν περὶ τὸν ἱππόδρομον ἑτέρα στόα μονόστεγος ἐργαστήρια ἔχουσα ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ οἰκῆσεις ὑπὲρ αὐτά.*

<sup>1</sup> Tac. l. c.: "Nec quisquam defendere audebat, crebris multorum minis restinguere prohibentium, et quia alii palam faces jaciebant atque sibi auctorem



At such a moment of sorrow and consternation, every trifle is seized to confirm the suspicion of foul play. The flames, it seems, had subsided after raging for six days, and the wretched outcasts were beginning to take breath and visit the ruins of their habitations, when a second conflagration burst out in a different quarter. This fire commenced at the point where the Æmilian gardens of Tigellinus abutted on the outskirts of the city beneath the Pincian hill; and it was on Tigellinus himself, the object already of popular scorn if not of anger, that the suspicion now fell. The wind, it seems, had now changed, for the fire spread from the north-west towards the Quirinal and the Viminal, destroying the buildings, more sparsely planted, of the quarter denominated the Via Lata. Three days exhausted the fury of this second visitation, in which the loss of life and property was less, but the edifices it overthrew were generally of greater interest, shrines and temples of the gods, and halls and porticos devoted to the amusement or convenience of the people. Altogether the disaster, whether it sprang from accident or design, involved nearly the whole of Rome. Of the fourteen regions of the city, three, we are assured, were entirely destroyed; while seven others were injured more or less severely: four only of the whole number escaped unhurt.<sup>1</sup> The fire made a complete

The fire bursts out a second time.

esse vociferabantur, sive ut raptas licentius exerceerent seu jussu. Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* xvii. 1.), Dion (lxii. 17, 18.), and Suetonius (*Ner.* 38.) attribute the fire to Nero's orders without hesitation, a view which generally recommended itself to the ancients.

<sup>1</sup> The three quarters which are said to have been destroyed must have been the Circus Max. (xi.), the Palatium (x.), and Isis and Serapis (iii.). I must question, however, the entire destruction of the great edifices on the Palatine: the temple of Apollo is mentioned only two years later by Suetonius (*Ner.* 25.), and the Sibylline oracles kept in it (comp. Amm. Marcell. xxiii. 3.) were consulted immediately afterwards. The destruction of the Palatine library in the fire of Commodus, a hundred and fifty years later, is mentioned by Galenus (*De Compos. Medicam.* i. 1.). Pliny speaks, however, of the temple of the Palatium, dedicated to Augustus by Livia, as consumed, *H. N.* xii. 42. The seven quarters partially injured appear to have been, first the Aventinus (xiii.), Piscina Publica (xii.), Via Sacra (iv.), Caelimontana (ii.), and Forum Romanum



clearance of the central quarters, leaving, perhaps, but few public buildings erect even on the Palatine and Aventine; but it was, for the most part, hemmed in by the crests of the surrounding eminences, and confined to the seething crater which had been the cradle of the Roman people. The day of its outburst, it was remarked, was that of the first burning of Rome by the Gauls, and some curious calculators computed that the addition of an equal number of years, months, and days together, would give the complete period which had elapsed in the long interval of her greatness.<sup>1</sup> Of the number of houses and insulæ destroyed, Tacitus does not venture to hazard a statement; he only tantalizes us by his slender notice of the famous fanes and monuments which sank in the common ruin. Among them were the temple of Diana, which Servius Tullius had erected; the shrine and altar of Hercules, consecrated by Evander, as affirmed in the

(viii.); yet the Capitoline was certainly untouched, and there is no reason to believe that the temples and basilicas which encompassed the forum suffered. In the second fire the Via Lata (vii.) and a great part of the Circus Flaminius (ix.) were devastated. The four which wholly escaped were the Transtiberina (xiv.), the Esquilina (v.), the Alta Semita (vi.), and the Porta Capena (i.). See Bunsen's *Rom.* i. 191. The nine days' duration is proved, not from the historians (Tacitus notes only the six days of the first fire), but by an inscription, Gruter, 61. 3. (Hoeck. p. 374. note). The great fire of London lasted only four days, and swept an area of 436 acres; while the space through which this conflagration raged, though with less complete destruction, must have comprised at least one third of Rome, or not less than three times that extent. Comp. Lambert's *Hist. of London*, ii. 91.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 41.: "Fuere qui adnotarent xiv. Kal. Sext. principium incendii hujus ortum quo et Senones captam Urbem inflammaverant: alii eo usque curæ progressi sunt ut *totidem annos mensesque et dies* inter utraque incendia numerent." The interpreters have given up generally the attempt to explain this obscure passage; but the principle of Grotefend's suggestion, which I take from Ritter's note, seems peculiarly happy. Between 19 July, 364, the received date of the Gaulish fire, and 19 July, 817, are exactly 453 years; and the addition of 417 years, 417 months, and 417 days, completes this period wanting about 40 days. If, on the other hand, we suppose these calculators to have taken 363 for the date of the Gaulish fire, the interval will be 454 years, and 418 years + 418 months + 418 days = 454 years — 8 days only.

tradition impressed upon us by Virgil;<sup>1</sup> the Romulean temple of Jupiter Stator, the remembrance of which thrilled the soul of the banished Ovid;<sup>2</sup> the little Regia of Numa, which armed so many a sarcasm against the pride of consuls and imperators; the sanctuary of Vesta herself, with the Palladium, the Penates, and the ever-glowing hearth of the Roman people. But the loss of these decayed, though venerable, objects was not the worst disaster. Many an unblemished masterpiece of the Grecian pencil, or chisel, or graver,—the prize of victory,—was devoured by the flames; and amidst all the splendour with which Rome rose afterwards from her ashes, old men could lament to the historian the irreparable sacrifice of these ancient glories.<sup>3</sup> Writings and documents of no common interest may have perished at the same time irrecoverably; and with them trophies, images, and family devices. At a moment when the heads of patrician houses were falling rapidly by the sword, the loss of such memorials was the more deplorable; and from this epoch we may date the decay, which we shall soon discover, in the domestic traditions of the nobles.

Nero was at Antium, nor did he quit that favourite residence till apprised that the flames had reached the long colonnades with which he had connected the mansion on the Palatine with the villa of Mæcenas. It would seem that with due energy the progress of the fire along these galleries might have been cut off; but

The fire imputed by the populace to Nero himself.

<sup>1</sup> Virg. *Æn.* viii. 270.:

“Hanc aram luco statuit, quæ maxima semper  
Dicetur nobis, et erit quæ maxima semper.”

<sup>2</sup> Ovid. *Trist.* iii. 1–49.:

“Adjice servatis unum, pater optime, civem . . . .  
Me miserum! vereorque locum, venerorque potentem.”

<sup>3</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 38.: “Domus priscorum ducum hostilibus adhuc spoliis adornatæ, Deorumque ædes, . . . . et quicquid visendum et memorabile ex antiquitate duraverat.” Tac. l. c.: “Monumenta ingeniorum antiqua et incorrupta:” which Lipsius characteristically interprets of the autograph writings of the ancients, so vainly regretted by reviving letters.

the attempt was either not made, or made too late, and the flames, it is said, extended to the palace, and involved it, or at least some portion of it, in the general ruin.<sup>1</sup> The injury indeed to Nero's own dwelling was greatly exaggerated, possibly to make him appear to have suffered equally with his people. Altogether, however, the disaster was the greatest that had befallen the city, since the era of the Gaulish invasion. The mansions of the nobles were seathed, but the cabins of the populace were annihilated. The prince was popularly held responsible for every public calamity; and when the rumour, not improbable in itself, was circulated, that Nero had watched the conflagration from the towers of his villa, and chaunted the *Sack of Troy* to his own lyre, the sufferers were prone to believe that he had commanded the city to be fired, and forbidden the flames to be extinguished.<sup>2</sup> Once, it was said, when the line before quoted by Tiberius, *After my death perish the world in fire*, was recited to him; *Nay, in my lifetime*, had been his fiendish reply. Another suspicion, hardly less horrible, prevailed, that he had caused the destruction of the ancient city, not out of pure wantonness, but in order to rebuild it more magnificently, and dignify the new Rome with his own name.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, whatever favour the populace had hitherto entertained towards

<sup>1</sup> The words of Tacitus are these (c. 39.): "Eo in tempore Nero, Antii agens, non ante in urbem regressus est quam *domui ejus*, qua palatium et Mæcenatis hortos *continuaverat*, ignis propinquaret. Neque tamen sisti potuit quin et palatium et domus et cuncta circum haurirentur." I have expressed in the text the qualification I must put on these words. There must have been a colonnade or gallery across the Velia to connect the buildings on the Palatine and the Esquiline, probably a viaduct, like the bridge of Caius across the Velabrum, with carriage-way underneath. This construction was possibly of wood. The palace on the Palatine may have been injured, but it could not have been destroyed without the destruction of every other edifice on that hill. That the other portion of the palace, the villa of Mæcenatiana on the Esquiline, wholly escaped seems certain from the anecdote which follows.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 38.: "Hoc incendium ex turre Mæcenatiana prospectans, lætusque flammæ ut aiebat pulchritudine, *ἄλωσιν* Ilii in illo suo scenico habitu decantavit." Comp. Dion, lxii. 29.; Juvenal, viii. 219.

<sup>3</sup> Suetonius, a faithful expounder of popular traditions, more than insinuates



the chief who flattered and amused them, they were now fiercely exasperated. It was to little purpose that he provided accommodation for the shelter of the houseless multitudes and supplied with anxious care their most pressing necessities,<sup>1</sup> It was in vain that the gods were soothed with holocausts, and the Sibyls' books consulted for expiations; that vows were offered to Vulcan, Ceres, and Proserpine, and Juno propitiated by processions of Roman matrons. The people continued to mutter their dissatisfaction with increasing significance; it was necessary to divert their suspicions by offering them another victim; and Nero seems to have saved himself at last, by sacrificing the little band of alien sectaries, already the objects of their hatred and reviling, *to whom the vulgar gave the name of Christians.*<sup>2</sup>

*This name, says Tacitus in a famous passage in his Annals, was derived from one Christus, who was executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. This accursed superstition, for a moment repressed, spread again, not over Judea only, the source of this evil, but the City also, whither all things vile and shameful find room and reception. Accordingly, he adds, those only were first arrested who avowed themselves of that sect, afterwards a vast number discovered by them, who were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning, as for their general hatred to mankind. Their execution was accompanied with mockery.*

this charge: "Quasi offensus deformitate veterum ædificiorum, et angustiis flexurisque vicorum, incendit urbem." *Ner.* 38.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. l. c.: "Solatium populo exturbato et profugo campum Martis et monumenta Agrippæ; hortos quin etiam suos patefecit; et subitaria ædificia extruxit quæ multitudinem inopem acciperent: subvectaque utensilia ab Ostia et propinquis municipiis; pretiumque frumenti minutum usque ad ternos numeros. Quæ, quanquam popularia, in irritum cadebant, quia pervaserat rumor, ipso tempore flagrantis urbis inisse eum domesticam scenam, et cecinisse Trojanum excidium, præsentia mala vetustis cladibus assimilantem."

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 44.: "Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos . . . quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis ejus Christus," &c. I shall enter in another place into the question, who were the persons to whom the vulgar applied this name? In the text I confine myself as closely as possible to the words of Tacitus.



*They were wrapped in skins to be torn in pieces by dogs, or crucified, and thus set on fire to serve as torches by night. Nero lent his own gardens for the spectacle, and gave a chariot race on the occasion, at which he mingled freely with the multitude in the garb of a driver, or actually holding the reins. The populace, however, turned with their usual levity to compassion for the sufferers, justly odious though they were held to be; for they felt that it was not for their actual guilt nor the common weal that they were punished, but to glut the ferocity of a single tyrant.<sup>1</sup>*

This horrid sacrifice, so deeply impressive to the minds of sixty generations of Christians, ruffled then for a moment the feelings of Roman society, and excited perhaps in the heart of the historian, impassive as he The rebuilding of Rome. constrains himself to appear, more pity, more wonder, more reflection at least, than he has deigned to intimate. But a few days passed, and when the people looked again around them, they beheld the reconstruction of their smoking city commencing with extraordinary vigour. The decision with which the plans of the government were taken, must appear to us perfectly amazing. The rebuilding of so large a portion of the largest of ancient cities on a general design, including the construction of a palace, to cover, or at least embrace with all its adjuncts, some hundreds of acres, was carried into execution without a moment's delay, and seems to have been

<sup>1</sup> This remarkable and often cited passage has several difficulties. I understand the "odium generis humani" to mean, not the hatred in which these sectaries were held, but rather their reputed enmity towards all others. It is a question whether the confession mentioned was of the burning or only of the Christian belief: I suppose the latter: "aut flammandi" is obscure in construction, but the sense cannot be doubtful: "sontes" may apply to the specific charge, meaning that the people really believed them guilty of it, or it may relate to the crime of their creed generally. The gardens referred to were on the slope of the Vatican, and embraced, it is supposed, the site of the Place and possibly of the Church of St. Peter's. The obelisk which now fronts that church stood on the spina of Nero's Circus, certainly not far from its present position. Mosheim (*De Reb. Chr. ante Constant. sæc.* 1. § 34.) fixes the beginning of this persecution to the middle of the November of this year.

effected in the course of the four years which intervened to the death of Nero.<sup>1</sup> The city of the plebs, a collection of narrow winding lanes which crept along the hollows at the foot of the seven hills, thronged with high unsightly masses of brick or wood-work, among which its shifting crowds could with difficulty wind their way, had long been an eyesore to the denizens of the patrician mansions above, constructed in the graceful style of Greece, their level lines of marble masonry flanked with airy colonnades, and interspersed with broad courts and gardens. This combination, indeed, or contrast of the ancient and the modern, the grotesque and the elegant, this upper growth of aristocratic luxury culminating above the smoky hives of vulgar industry, must have given a character to the whole eminently striking and picturesque. Rome was indeed a double city, half Greek and half Italian. The elements of change long operating in its manners were equally active in its external development. Grecian forms were steadily encroaching on the indigenous features of its architecture. To reform, to improve, had been in fact to copy foreign, and to displace native, models. The marble Rome of Augustus, restorer as he professed himself, was a Grecian mask applied to a Roman countenance. Every new temple or theatre, bath or fountain, added another Hellenic object to the scene, and aided in this gradual disintegration. Nero in all his tastes was Grecian or Oriental; yet when this grand opportunity offered for recasting the lower city on the model he admired, the promptness with which he seized it shows that he followed an instinct of the times, and not a mere caprice of his own. The architects were ready at once with their plans for a total reconstruction after the fashion of Athens or Antioch, a style more familiar to their schools

<sup>1</sup> The conflagration took place in July, 817. Nero's death followed in June, 821; but it would appear that the rebuilding had been completed before that time; certainly the palace had been completed much earlier. It is impossible not to suspect, from this and other circumstances, that the destruction was less extensive than has been represented. The temple of Apollo—apparently that on the Palatine—is mentioned in the year 822 (Tac. *Hist.* iii. 65.).

than the obsolete Italian. After the fire of the Gauls Rome had been rebuilt by the citizens themselves, each man for himself from his own notions and resources; the whole resulting in manifold combinations of a few simple elements, the wooden shed, the broad brick wall, the narrow windows, the projecting eaves, the pointed gable.<sup>1</sup> But after Nero's fire restoration was the work of the government: the citizens, the mass at least of the lower classes who still dwelt in the valleys, were not rich enough to build for themselves, even had they been suffered to do so: the treasury supplied them with money, but at the same time provided them with designs: the time had come when the rulers of the state must execute all great public works for the people, and employ the services of a profession to which architecture of a foreign type was alone familiar. The character indeed of the site, and the necessity of lodging vast numbers upon small areas, must have tended to modify the more lax and spacious features of Hellenic architecture: the crowded dwellings of the Suburra and Velabrum could not have been less than fifty, sixty, or even seventy feet in height: but the substitution, to a great extent, of stone for brick or wood in the basement at least of these edifices, the straightening and widening of the streets, and the erection of open colonnades round every block of houses, was the application of a foreign style, which completely changed the external appearance of Rome. On the whole the system of Nero and his architects was both salubrious and convenient, though many citizens, admirers of all things old, continued to lament the disappearance of their dark and tortuous alleys, and to allege, with some justice perhaps, that the narrowness of the avenues and the height of

<sup>1</sup> The *fastigiata* and *pectinata tecta* seem to imply something more than the Greek pediment, and to have been in common use for dwelling-houses, not only for public buildings. There is perhaps no distinct notice of gable ends to the ordinary Roman roofs; but the fact that the earliest temples at Rome were thatched, and therefore of course dwellings also, shows that the roofs must have been high-pitched.



the overhanging edifices had afforded a grateful shade in summer, and protection from the winds in winter.<sup>1</sup>

But Nero, we are told, took advantage of the void which had been created for another and more selfish purpose. He determined to extend in various directions the limits of his own residence, and to cover a large portion of the area of Rome with the buildings of the Imperial palace. On this point, however, I am constrained to be sceptical. We have already seen that he had before connected the older residence of the Cæsars, enlarged as it had been by successive occupants, on the Palatine, with the villa of Mæcenas on the Esquiline, by a series of galleries which spanned, perhaps, the hollow between those hills on arches, so as to allow of the circulation of the populace in the most crowded parts of the city below it. Such seems to have been the character of the *Domus Transitoria* or House of Passage, which fell, as we have seen, a prey to the flames. I much question, however, whether either of the edifices which it connected had suffered very severely, and the Golden House, as the restored palace was denominated, was still the old mansion of Augustus and the villa of Mæcenas connected a second time by a long series of columns and arches. It is probable, indeed, that the House of Passage was now considerably enlarged, and made to embrace a vast extent of gardens, with their baths, their fishponds, and their storied terraces.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the public must always have had

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 43.: "Erant tamen qui crederent veterem illam formam salubritati magis conduxisse." Whatever we may think of the justice of this complaint, it may be worth remarking, as a sign of the difference in our own ideas and the Roman, that there is no expression of regret for the picturesque features of the ancient city so ruthlessly sacrificed to the taste or judgment of the day.

<sup>2</sup> This house, says Tacitus, was not so remarkable for its gold and precious stones, as for the gardens it embraced: "arva et stagna, et in modum solitudinum hinc sylvæ, inde aperta spatia et prospectus," c. 42. The taste of the Romans in gardening required geometrical lines of gravel, pavement, box borders, and shrubberies. See the younger Pliny's description of his Tuscan villa (*Ep.* v. 6.), and some of the frescoes still visible on the walls of houses in



means of communication beneath these galleries, or through them, from the forum to the Cælian hill, and to the Esquiline or Capene gates. We cannot suppose that the emperor's stone walls intercepted the Sacred and the Appian Ways. These colonnades, such as I have imagined them, were three in number; each of them, it is said, a mile in length. They reached, it may be presumed, from the bridge of Caius over the Velabrum, which was perhaps destroyed by the fire, and never, as far as we know, rebuilt, almost to the site of S. Maria Maggiore on the Esquiline, and of S. Gregorio on the Cælian, and these were again connected perhaps by a third.<sup>1</sup> The area now filled with the Colosseum was embraced within their ample circuit, and this spot was occupied by a basin of water.<sup>2</sup> It is a pardonable extravagance in Pliny to declare that the city was *encompassed* by the palace of Nero; but this expression, which he has applied also to the far less extensive encroachments of Caius, seems to show that even within the circuit of its ample arcades many houses, streets,

Pompeii. Matius, the friend of Cæsar, invented the art of cutting yews, box, and cyprus into figures of men and animals (Plin. *H. N.* xii. 6.), and this grotesque practice survived to the time of Pliny and Martial (Mart. iii. 58., xii. 50.). Nero, I presume, ventured to discard this formality, and his attempt to restore some natural features to a garden landscape offended the admirers of antiquity. This was the "*rure vero barbaroque lætari*" of Martial. I refer to Prof. Daubeny's *Lectures on Roman Husbandry*, vii., for these and further details of the subject of Roman gardening.

<sup>1</sup> Martial (*de Spect.* 2.) defines the limits of this palace in two directions by the baths of Titus on the Esquiline, and the portico of Claudius, connected, it may be presumed, with his unfinished temple on the Cælian:

"Claudia diffusas ubi porticus explicat umbras,  
Ultima pars aulæ deficientis erat."

It has been mentioned that Nero is said to have destroyed the works of the Claudian temple: this, if not a misrepresentation, was probably to make room for his own constructions.

<sup>2</sup> Martial, l. c.:

"Hic ubi conspicui venerabilis amphitheatri  
Erigitur species, stagna Neronis erant."

Comp. Suet. *Ner.* 31.: "Stagnum maris instar, circumseptum ædificiis ad urbium speciem: rura insuper, arvis atque vinetis, et pascuis silvisque varia."

and places were surrendered to the occupation of the citizens. We should still less expect strict accuracy in the statements of a *pâsquade*, which has been preserved to us by Suetonius. Insinuating a direct comparison between the conflagration of the Gauls and of Nero, *Rome*, it said, *will be reduced to a single house: migrate, O Romans, to Veii, like your ancestors before you; if Veii indeed itself be not embraced also by that single house.*<sup>1</sup> But the epithet of Golden, which this palace obtained, was derived from the splendour of its decorations. Externally it was adorned with all the luxury of art and taste at their highest eminence, with gilded roofs and sculptured friezes, and panels of many-coloured marble. Within, it was a rich museum of painting, precious stones, and statuary: amidst the rubbish of its long-ruined chambers some of the choicest works of ancient art have been discovered, and the modern frescoes which we most admire seem to have been copied by stolen glimpses from walls unveiled for a moment and again shrouded in darkness.<sup>2</sup> The grand entrance from the forum and the Sacred Way was adorned with a marble statue of the emperor 120 feet in height, the colossus which afterwards gave its name to the amphitheatre of Vespasian. When Nero at last took possession of this gorgeous habitation, he remarked complacently that *now he was lodged as a man should be.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 39.:

“Roma domus fiet: Veios migrate Quirites;  
Si non et Veios occupet una domus.”

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 31.: “In cæteris partibus cuncta auro lita, distincta gemmis unionumque conchis erant. Cœnationes laqueatæ tabulis eburneis versatilibus,” &c. The baths of Titus were afterwards erected on a part of this palace on the Esquiline, and stand on its lower chambers, within which the great vase of the Vatican and other monuments of art have been discovered. The *Laocoon* was found similarly imbedded at no great distance. How such works came to be there left amidst the rubbish seems inexplicable. It is believed that Raphael took the designs of some of his arabesques from paintings revealed in these chambers, which he purposely caused to be filled up again, to conceal the plagiarism.

<sup>3</sup> Martial, i. 2. Suet. l. c.: “Se quasi hominem jam habitare cœpisse.”

These vast constructions were planned and executed by the architects Severus and Celer, both of them, it may be remarked, not of Greek but of Roman origin. These men seem to have been bold designers as well as able builders; their profession combined engineering with architecture. They had great influence with their master, and seem to have inspired him with many grand conceptions, the exact purport of which may have been inadequately represented to us. The navigable canal which they projected, from the lake of Avernus and the Julian haven to Rome, was evidently not a mere freak of power, but a work of utility for the transport of grain to the city.<sup>1</sup> The attempt, made in earnest, was probably abandoned from caprice. The rebuilding of Rome in the course of four years tasked all the energies of the artisans of Italy. But the expense of these extraordinary efforts caused on the whole more dangerous discontent than the worst caprices of tyranny; and unless we suppose Nero devoid of the most ordinary foresight, we must allow that he would hardly have caused a conflagration, which could not fail to entangle him in fatal embarrassments. He was compelled to strain the patience of his subjects by increased exactions. An organized system of plunder was now extended throughout the empire, which ruined the citizens, the allies, and the free communities. Nero began by requiring contributions, under the name of free gifts; and neglect in responding to this invitation was visited by heavier imposts. Treasures, human and divine, were swept into the gulf. The temples of Rome itself were denuded of the offerings of ages, the spoil of con-

Exactions and confiscations required to defray the expense of these constructions.

<sup>1</sup> Nero is said also to have designed extending Rome to Ostia. Suetonius says of his buildings, "Non in alia re damnosior quam in ædificando." The magnificence of his baths continued to be celebrated long after him. Martial says of them, "Quid Nerone pejus? Quid thermis melius Neronianis?" The Church of S. Louis, on the Pincian, is supposed to stand upon them. Ampère, *Hist. Romaine à Rome*, § 3. In the year 817 Nero erected himself also a triumphal arch on the Capitoline, to celebrate his pretended successes against the Parthians. To occupy that sacred site with a monument of personal vanity was an act of unprecedented ostentation. Tac. *Ann.* xv. 18.



quered enemies long hoarded in the shrines of the gods, the trophies of victories and triumphs held sacred through all emergencies, which even Cæsar, who sacked the treasury, had reluctantly respected.<sup>1</sup> From Greece and Asia not the offerings only, but the images of the gods themselves, were carried off by authorized commissioners.<sup>2</sup> Of these Acratus was a freedman of the palace, who retained as a courtier the spirit of a slave;<sup>3</sup> Carrinas Secundus, a freeborn Roman, once a teacher of rhetoric, who had starved at Athens in the practice of his profession, acquired notoriety at Rome, and suffered banishment as a declaimer on tyrannicide, now finished his career as an unscrupulous agent of tyranny.<sup>4</sup> Seneca, as a man of sense and honour, was shocked at these outrages on the national feeling of the Greeks, and distressed lest they should be ascribed to his counsels. Once more he begged leave to retire into privacy. Again disappointed, he affected sickness, and confined himself strictly to his chamber. Some averred that his life was now attempted by poison at Nero's instigation; that he escaped either by the confession of the person employed, or by his own care in abstaining from all suspicious viands, and tasting nothing but plain fruits and vegetables, bread and water. Insults such as these to the faith and feelings of the people were accompanied, no doubt, by cruel extortions and the confiscation of private possessions; and Nero, emboldened by the incredible submission of the world to his feeble sceptre, treated gods and men alike as mere slaves of his will, ordained equally, whether in earth or heaven, for his personal service and gratification. Neverthe-

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, xv. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Pausanias refers to the spoliation of the Grecian temples by Nero: v. 25, 26., ix. 27., x. 7. From Delphi he carried off no less than five hundred brazen statues. Caius had robbed the Thespians of a Cupid by Praxiteles, which Claudius restored them. Nero seized it a second time. Comp. Dion Chrys. *Or. Rhod.* p. 355. Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xxxiv. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. l. c.; Dion Chrys. l. c.: ἴστε γὰρ Ἀκρατος ἐκεῖνος τὴν οἰκουμένην σχεδὸν ἀπάσαν περιελθὼν τοῦτον χάριν.

<sup>4</sup> For Carrinas see Dion, lix. 20., and compare Juvenal, vii. 204., alluding, as is generally supposed, to the same person.



less the calamities with which this year closed must have struck him with alarm in the midst of his frantic caprices. An outbreak of gladiators at Præneste was speedily suppressed; but it reminded men of the attempt of Spartacus, and the ancient troubles of the republic, and betrayed the fact that the prospect of revolution was contemplated with hope no less than with apprehension. The loss of some galleys on the Campanian coast, through a thoughtless command of the emperor's which their captains dared not disobey, might impress the singer of the Sack of Ilium with Minerva's vengeance on an older sacrilege; <sup>1</sup> while the occurrence of fearful prodigies, of monstrous births, of storms and meteors, above all, the blazing of a comet, extorted from the soothsayers the prophecy of a new rebellion, though they ventured to promise that it should be instantly quelled. <sup>2</sup>

Followed by  
portents and  
disasters.

This apprehension of impending change was, indeed, no groundless presentiment. Nero's crimes and follies had been

<sup>1</sup> Virg. *Æn.* xi. 260.:

"Seit triste Minervæ

Sidus, et Euboicæ cautes, ultorque Caphareus."

Tac. *Ann.* xv. 46.: "Clades rei navalis, non bello, quippe haud alias tam immota pax." Comp. the fragment of Turnus, Wernsdorf, *Poet. Lat. Min.* iii.: "Et molle imperii senium sub nomine pacis."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 47.: "Sidus cometes, semper illustri sanguine Neroni expiatum." Seneca's allusion to this comet is curious, if he was conscious of the conspiracy at that moment in agitation. *Nat. Quæst.* vii. 17.: "Qui sub Nerone apparuit et cometis detraxit infamiam." Virgil speaks generally of the evil influence of comets: "Cometæ Sanguinei lugubre rubent." *Æn.* x. 272. The instinct of a later generation made them always presage evil to tyrants. Lucan, i. 528.: "Terris mutantem regna cometen." Stat. *Theb.* i. fin.: "Mutent quæ sceptrâ cometæ." Sil. i. 460.: "Terret fera regna cometes." And so our republican Milton: "Which with fear of change Perplexes monarchs." To the portent of the comet, Tacitus adds: "Bieipites hominum partus . . . natus vitulus cui caput in crure esset." The double head presaged unnatural rivalry. Comp. Lucan, i. 626:

"Quodque, nefas, nullis impune apparuit extis,  
Ecce! videt capiti fibrarum increscere molem  
Alterius capitis."

long threatened with retribution; and the murmurs of the injured had deepened into a fixed discontent, which official seers might represent as a token of an occult conspiracy.

Growing discontent of the nobility.

Among the nobles there were many who complained of personal insults, many whose ambition, whether criminal or honest, had met with unexpected rebuffs, many, no doubt, who had suffered wanton oppression; others who resented the degradation of the republic; lastly, there were some who watched their discontent from a distance, awaiting the moment when they might turn it to their own aggrandisement. It was necessary to fix on some personage around whom the discontented could rally, and whom they could agree to substitute for Nero. There was no idea, in any quarter, of returning to the ancient free state. The pride of independence and mutual equality, once so strong in the Roman aristocracy, had collapsed for ever; to the mass of the people it had never been known. The necessity of monarchy was indeed enforced by practical considerations. No conspiracy could hope for success without the support of the soldiers; the soldiers would not draw their swords for a political abstraction; and any leader to whom they gave their allegiance, must have Rome and the empire at his feet. If, however, they could not escape from subjection to a single ruler, the nobles were anxious to have an easy and quiet man, who would interfere little with them, and even pretend to put himself under their protection. Among the great families already scathed by proscriptions, there was at this time but one peculiarly eminent which was not connected with the hated house of the Claudii and the Julii. The Pisos had long borne themselves as rivals of the emperors: a Cnæus Piso, as we have seen, had fancied himself the equal of Tiberius; and the pride with which another had threatened to withdraw from public life, showed that he could not brook to act as a subordinate. Even after the death of Cnæus, and the disgrace of his house, his sons and grandsons had continued to hold their rank among the Roman nobility. One of the first caprices of Caligula was his

attempt to degrade the head of the Calpurnii, by taking from him his wife, and afterwards by banishing him.<sup>1</sup> But this man, C. Calpurnius Piso, was restored to favour by Claudius, in compliment to the senate; he was moreover elevated to the consulship. The eloquence of the speech with which he repaid this indulgence has been especially commemorated in the verses of a client or parasite.<sup>2</sup> His abilities, his riches, his liberality are all equally extolled by the same panegyrist; but they are sufficiently confirmed by the sincerer testimony of an historian and a satirist.<sup>3</sup> Piso, however, was not a man of action, and in the absence of higher aims in life he became celebrated for his skill in the mock campaigns of chess or draughts. His mild temper was not agitated, perhaps, by the illusions of political ambition; but he disdained to yield precedence to any other, and held aloof, as far as possible, from public life till tempted in an unwary moment with the offer of pre-eminence.

They form a conspiracy and place Piso at its head.

Around this central figure, itself of no great mark or hopefulness, were soon grouped a number of lesser men, senators, knights, and military officers, intent upon transferring the empire to him from the last descendant of the Julii. Women were also admitted to the conspiracy. Fenius Rufus, the colleague of Tigellinus in command of the prætorians, was impelled to join it by hatred towards the rival who had eclipsed him in his chief's regards. His position, if not his personal qualities, gave him the foremost place in the whole band. Another of the conspirators, a man of more vehemence than

The conspirators, and their plans for the assassination of the emperor.

<sup>1</sup> C. Calpurnius Piso was banished for taking back his wife, after the emperor had dismissed her. Caligula had probably a political motive in this outrageous tyranny. He wanted to bring the rival family to an end.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Carmen ad Pison*. 68. This poem is ascribed by Wernsdorf to Saleius Bassus, the "tenuis Saleius" of Juvenal: it is certainly not Lucan's.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 48. Juvenal, v. 108.: "Quæ Piso bonus, quæ Cotta solebat Largiri." The scholiast on this passage confirms, with some additions, the account of Suetonius, *Calig.* 25. He mentions also Piso's fame, "in ludo latrunculorum," by which he is identified with the subject of the panegyric.



vigour, was the youthful poet M. Annæus Lucanus, who, in the better years of Nero's career, had been his associate and a rival in versification, and is supposed to have suffered slights from the imperial jealousy.<sup>1</sup> Dion has specified Seneca, Lucan's uncle, as also an accomplice.<sup>2</sup> The tribune of a prætorian cohort, named Subrius Flavus, claimed the honour of assassinating the emperor with his own hand. He proposed to attack him openly while singing on the stage, and again, in the confusion of the conflagration of Rome, to waylay him among the passages of his burning palace.<sup>3</sup> He seems, however, to have been a man of no real determination, and to have shrunk in either case from the personal hazard. It was next proposed to strike the blow when the emperor was at a private villa of Piso's: again Piso refused to violate the laws of hospitality, a piece of sentiment which in such a matter can hardly command our respect. Some indeed surmised that in fact he feared to leave the capital open to a possible rival, or even to the senate and the partisans, if such there were, of a republic.<sup>4</sup> But indecision reigned on all sides among the conspirators. Their behaviour was as frivolous as

<sup>1</sup> The statement in the anonymous life of Lucan (*ex comment. antiquissimo*), that he gained the prize from the emperor at the Quinquennia, is contrary to the text of the genuine biography of Nero. See *Suet. Ner.* 12, 21. The short fragment upon Lucan ascribed to Suetonius affirms, with more probability, that he provoked his patron by some indiscretions, and, having lost his favour, proceeded first to libel and afterwards to conspire against him. But that Nero was jealous of his talent and forbade him to exhibit in public, is distinctly asserted by Tacitus, *Ann.* xv. 49.: "Lucanum propriæ causæ ascendebant quod famam carminum ejus premebat Nero, prohibueratque ostentare vanus assimilatione."

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxii. 24. If not actually engaged in the plot we may infer, I think, from Tacitus that he was aware of it. The sentiment ascribed to him by Dion, that the assassination was necessary to free Rome from Nero and to free Nero from himself, savours of Seneca's rhetoric.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 50. This statement, dropped negligently by the historian, shows, if true, that the conspiracy had been long in agitation.

<sup>4</sup> The apprehended rival was L. Junius Torquatus Silanus, the son of M. Silanus (*pecus aurea*) cons. A. D. 46, poisoned by Agrippina. See above, c. lii. Lucius was *atnepos*, or great-great-grandson, of Augustus.



the motives generally attributed to them were personal and selfish. One indeed among them a freedwoman named Epicharis (but why a woman among them at all? why a Grecian freedwoman?) seems to have acted with more sense and spirit than any of the men. Not only did she embrace their plans with ardour, and nerve their courage to the utmost, but while they were concerting imprudent schemes, and again lightly relinquishing them, she alone undertook to gain the fleet at Misenum, which protected the corn fleets of Alexandria, and held the existence of Rome in its hands. Possibly she, too, was more energetic than discreet. Her secret was betrayed by an officer named Volusius, whom she had engaged in the scheme; but she alone was arrested. The names of her confederates she had concealed from her betrayer, and while she was still retained in custody, and fruitlessly interrogated, the conspirators, trusting to her fortitude and fidelity, continued to meet and deliberate. At last they fixed the nineteenth of April, the day of the Circensian games, for executing their enterprise. A senator named Scævinius demanded the honour of striking the blow, and for this purpose abstracted a votive dagger from a temple of Salus or of Fortune.<sup>1</sup> It was arranged that he should make the attack with the support of a chosen party in the senate, while Plautius Lateranus was prostrating himself before the

<sup>1</sup> I would willingly conjecture that there was some connexion between this Scævinius and the Scæva whom Lucan so delights to honour: *Comp. Phars.* vi. 256.:

“Exornantque Deos ac nudum pectore Martem  
Armis Scæva tuis: felix hoc nomine famæ,” &c.

The last lines the poet penned contain a thrilling reminiscence of this true Roman hero, Cæsarean though he was:

“Scævam perpetuæ meritum jam nomina famæ  
Ad campos, Epidamne, tuos, ubi solus apertis  
Obsedit muris calcantem mœnia Magnum.” x. extr.

We might imagine him only holding his hand, till Scævinius should strike down the last of the Julii, to complete the passage with a sentiment like that of the verse I have before quoted:

“Vivat, et ut Bruti procumbat victima, regnet.”

emperor, and clinging to his limbs or throwing him down. Piso himself was to await the result in the adjacent temple of Ceres, whence Fenius was to fetch him to the camp, and present him, together with Antonia, the daughter of Claudius, to the soldiers. It was still deemed expedient to conciliate the soldiery by the presence of a representative of Germanicus. Such, at least, was the account given by Pliny, though Tacitus hesitates to believe it, from the known attachment of Piso to his wife, and the improbability of Antonia embracing a scheme from which, except by marriage with Piso, she could reap no personal advantage.<sup>1</sup> There seems, however, little force in the objection, while in the abiding sense it implies of military devotion there is something both natural and touching.

And here the historian remarks on the fidelity with which the secret was kept among confederates of different rank, age, and sex. The plot seems to have been in agitation for nearly a year, and even the indiscretion of Epicharis, if we may believe our accounts, seems not to have materially endangered it. But the bold and eager Scævinius at last unwittingly betrayed it. The day before the attempt was to be made, after holding a long conversation with one of the party, he was observed to seal his will, then taking his dagger from its sheath, and trying its edge, he gave it to a freedman, named Milichus, to sharpen. He then lay down to a supper of more than usual profusion, and gave freedom to the most esteemed of his slaves. At the same time his manner was that of a man labouring under anxiety, which he tried in vain to disguise by the assumption of excessive hilarity. Finally he charged Milichus to prepare bandages and fomentations for the cure of wounds. These circumstances awakened suspicion, if indeed Milichus was not actually admitted to the secret. At all events the wretch, *whose servile nature had not been eradicated by freedom*, was tempted to reveal his suspicions by hopes of a splendid re-

Conviction and  
execution of  
the conspira-  
tors.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 53.

ward.<sup>1</sup> The first of the conspirators who were arrested at his indication, and threatened with the question, made ample disclosures. Hopes of pardon induced them to denounce one another, together with some perhaps who were innocent; and Lucan, in particular, is charged with thus revealing the name of his own mother. Such charges, it must be remembered, are commonly made by unscrupulous governments to disgrace a commiserated victim. But the sufferings of a freed-woman would excite little sympathy, and Epi-  
Constancy of  
Epicharis.
charis alone, it was admitted, from the weakness of whose sex greater infirmity might be expected, refused to betray the men who had trusted her. When, after being lacerated on the rack, she was brought a second time before her judges, bound to the chair, in which she could not sit unsupported, she contrived to strangle herself with the thongs, and died without a confession. Of all the con-  
Treachery of  
Fenius Rufus.
spirators, Fenius Rufus was the one whose fate deserved the least pity. As prefect of the guards, he contrived adroitly to place himself on the tribunal by the side of Tigellinus, and sought to screen himself from inquiry by the violence with which he judged his own associates. Denounced at last by one of the victims, he turned pale, stammered, and was unable to defend himself.<sup>2</sup> The accused were speedily convicted. Doomed without mercy by this domestic inquisition, they were allowed only to choose their mode of death, an indulgence which spared the government the odium of a public sentence. When escape was impossible, the culprits suffered with the callous fortitude which had become habitual with their class under the terrors of the imperial tyranny. If they deigned to flatter the  
Death of Lucan.
prince with their last breath, it was for the sake of their children. Lucan died with a firmness which, while he still hoped for pardon, is said to have failed him; and, when his veins were opened in the bath, found consolation in reciting some of his own verses, descriptive of a monstrous

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 56, 57.<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 66.



death by bleeding at every pore.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps his conscience would not suffer him to utter at such a moment those denunciations of a tyranny he had so often flattered, or that praise of constancy he had failed to exhibit, with which so much of his poetry glows. *Swords*, he had once exclaimed, *were given men that they might never be slaves*. Again, *he is happiest who is content to die, next happiest he who is compelled*.<sup>2</sup>

Among the first on whom sentence was pronounced was the unfortunate Seneca, who had in vain withdrawn himself from public affairs, in vain relinquished to the emperor the riches he supposed him to covet. He had long lived in expectation of this catastrophe, and Nero had striven to reassure him by a show of confidence and regard. Nero might indeed be indifferent to his ancient friend; but he had no reason to bear him malice. It was to Poppæa more probably that he owed his doom, for she was not likely to forgive the zeal with which he had dissuaded her lover from repudiating Octavia, and she felt her own influence to depend on removing from

Death of Seneca. Nero's sight even the shadow of honour and virtue. It is some consolation to be assured that his end was composed and dignified.<sup>3</sup> He caused his veins to be opened in the presence of his friends and kindred, and continued calmly to converse with them through the protracted agony of a death, which his age and the sluggishness of his blood rendered peculiarly painful.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 70. The lines were probably those of *Phars.* ix. 811. foll.:

"Sanguis erant lachrymæ; quæcunque foramina novit  
Humor, ab his largus manat cruor; ora redundant,  
Et patulæ nares; sudor rubet; omnia plenis  
Membra fluunt venis: totum est pro vulnere corpus."

<sup>2</sup> Comp. iv. 575.: "Ignoratque datos ne quisquam serviat enses." x. 211.: "Scire mori sors prima viris, sed proxima cogi."

<sup>3</sup> We may hope that there is no truth in the story introduced by Dion, that Seneca urged his wife Paulina to die with him, to show how successful his lessons had been in teaching her to despise death. She let him open her veins, we are told, but on his dying first, caused them to be bound up again. Dion, lxii. 25.: Comp. Tac. *Ann.* xv. 64.

<sup>4</sup> This mode of bleeding to death seems to have been so commonly adopted



The threats of some, and even the calmness of his other victims, redoubled Nero's alarm. They seemed equally to rely on speedy vengeance, to point to unseen avengers. Roused to wild fury by the necessities of self-defence, he extended his blows from the actual conspirators to many more whom he feared and suspected, and his thirst for their blood was stimulated by the glittering prospect of rich estates. The property of men who had been suffered to die by their own hand could not legally be confiscated, and to seize it, sentence of banishment must issue against their heirs, or they must be removed by assassination. Nero invoked the skill of the poisoners. The courage of the miserable nobles quailed completely before the arrow which flies in darkness. For every execution, for every murder, vows and sacrifices were offered in the Capitol. Parents thanked the gods for the loss of their children, sons for the loss of their fathers: the palace doors were hung with garlands by the relations of those over whom the prince was declared to have *justly triumphed*. Nero himself was not unmindful of the informers whose treachery had saved him. Milichus, besides rewards in money, received the title of Preserver. The soldiers were enriched with a donative; the populace were gratified with two thousand sesterces each, and an ample largess of corn. Tigellinus and Nerva, who had conducted the inquiry, were honoured with triumphal statues.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless Nero seems to have faintly excused his severity, and declared in an harangue to the senate, that he was urged by no private feelings, but only by the necessity of his position and the demands of the public safety. This sufficed to open the flood-gates of patrician flattery. The

Further prosecutions, and base adulation of the senate.

from an idea that it was comparatively painless. I have heard that a high medical authority has pronounced it to be much the reverse, at least when the circulation is languid. In such cases the Romans were wont to accelerate the flow of blood with the warm bath: Seneca, in his impatience, allowed himself to be stifled with the steam.

<sup>1</sup> This Nerva is supposed to have been son to the jurist who has been mentioned as intimate with Tiberius. He is not to be confounded with the future emperor of the same name, of whom he may have been the father.

most shameless decrees followed in his honour: thanks and offerings to the gods were, as usual, precipitately voted, and the day of his escape was recommended to perpetual commemoration. The proposal of Anicius Cerialis to erect him a temple forthwith, was only put timidly aside on the pretence that it might seem to anticipate his death; for it was only after death, according to established usage, that the emperor could be pronounced immortal.<sup>1</sup>

But already, not long before the era at which we are now arrived, the living Nero had enjoyed a poetical apotheosis.

Lucan's early compliments to Nero. Lucan had expressed, in the fervour of his youthful intimacy with the most accomplished of princes, the sentiment common to many dreamers of the day, that the age of conflicts and disasters through which the state had passed was requited by the advent of a Nero to power. This was a compensation for Pharsalia and Munda, for Perusia and Philippi. The ruin of cities, the desolation of fields, the destruction of teeming populations, all were repaid by the prosperity which this child of fortune was to inaugurate. Even the gods of Olympus, it was declared, could not enjoy their ever-blessed sovereignty till they had conquered peace by the overthrow of the giants.<sup>2</sup> There

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 74. Modern historians have followed one another in asserting that divine honours were paid by Rome to the living Nero. This passage, to which they alone blindly refer, proves precisely the reverse. "Reperio in commentariis senatus Cerialem Anicium, consulem designatum, pro sententia dixisse, ut templum D. Neroni quam maturrime publica pecunia poneretur. Quod quidem ille *decernebat* (proposed), tanquam mortale fastigium egresso . . . ." The remainder of the sentence is corrupt, but the context implies that the proposal was rejected. Setting aside the momentary freaks of Caligula, no Roman emperor, at least for the first two centuries, allowed himself to be worshipped by the citizens; "Jurabit Roma *per umbras*," was the worst in this respect that republican indignation could say of them.

<sup>2</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* i. 37.:

"Jam nihil, O superi, querimur; scelera ipsa nefasque  
Hac mercede placent," &c.

It was not till a later period that Nero affected to close the temple of Janus, "tanquam nullo residuo bello;" the true reading apparently of Suet. *Ner.* 13.:

is more, I believe, in this encomium than merely extravagant flattery. Setting aside the vaunted merits of the prince himself, in which none but juvenile triflers should have seen much to admire, the age seems to have been impressed with signs which to more thoughtful men betokened extraordinary felicity. A blaze of luxury dazzled all eyes. The profusion of the higher classes was taken for a proof of their wealth; but wealthy they undoubtedly were beyond all former experience. The rapidity with which fortunes were made, as it were underground, by the ministers of the imperial government, even by freedmen and slaves, urged men to projects and speculations, to secret investments, and distant enterprises. It would appear that the great and ancient families, which had escaped the proscriptions of recent tyrants, had removed the sources of their abundance from the observation of the central government; and the riches they displayed in the capital might seem to have dropped from the clouds, or sprung from the bosom of the soil. Presently the public was amazed to learn that one half of the province of Africa was held in fee by six noble families of Rome. Such is the statement of a contemporary, and no doubt that statement was believed.<sup>1</sup> The existence of these vast appropriations, indeed, was only made known by their confiscation. But when the emperor's eyes were once directed to that land of fabled riches, the seat of the famous garden of the Hesperides, it was easy to palm fictions upon him, which should exceed the glowing realities of the fortune he enjoyed. A strange story is told of a brainless projector, a man of Punic

Popular anticipation of an age of extraordinary felicity.

Pretended discovery of the treasures of Dido.

but anticipations of a golden age of peace to follow when he should be translated to divine power in the skies were already popular:

“Tum genus humanum positis sibi consulat armis,  
Inque vicem gens omnis amet: pax missa per orbem  
Ferrea belligeri compeseat limina Jani.”

<sup>1</sup> Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xviii. 7. 3. Speaking of the pernicious extent of private domains in Italy and the provinces: “Sex domini semissem Africæ possidebant, quum interfecit eos Nero princeps.”



origin, named Cesellius Bassus, who was persuaded, apparently by a dream, that a hoard of gold, in bars and ingots, was to be found in a cave on his own land, which he presumed to be the deposit of Dido, queen of Carthage.<sup>1</sup> He crossed the sea, and hastened to acquaint the prince of the treasure-trove, which by law accrued to the fiscus. Access to Nero, even on such an errand, could only be obtained by money, and Bassus purchased at a handsome price admittance for his glittering tale. For its truth indeed he had no evidence to offer, nor, it seems, was any demanded. The spendthrift's hopes were unclouded by misgivings. He allowed the story to be circulated through Rome, and regaled his ears, while his preparations were in progress, with the flattery of his courtiers, who continued to inflame his expectations. At the same moment the Quinquennial games were in course of celebration, and the circumstance was seized by the poets and declaimers to dilate on the prince's fortune, for whom the soil bore not her accustomed fruits only, nor her precious metals alloyed with dross and earth, but the pure ore itself, already refined for use. Fired with these glowing benedictions, he plunged into deeper prodigality than ever. He became reckless in the profusion of treasures which he believed to be unlimited; the treasury was speedily exhausted in the anticipation of unbounded replenishment. But the officers sent under the guidance of Bassus to recover the hoards he had indicated, spent their time in exploring and digging to no purpose. The people and the soldiers of the province turned out in crowds to witness the search and to protect it. After examining, spade in hand, every corner of the wretched man's estate, with more patience than his crazy tale deserved, they were obliged at last to report the total disappointment of their hopes; and he either put himself to death in despair, or, according to another account, was sent in chains to Rome to answer for his folly or his crime.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 1.: "Lateres (ingots) prægraves jacere, adstantibus parte alia columnis" (bars.)

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 1-3. A. U. 818, A. D. 65. It was even affirmed by some that the culprit was contemptuously released.

What remains of the year 818, the most fertile perhaps in all our annals in marked contrasts of the horrid and ludicrous, of public and private sufferings, of barbarous cruelty and frantic resistance, shall be told nearly in the words of Tacitus himself. *The* Nero's performance in the theatre.  
*senate*, the historian says, *on the return of the Neronian (Quinquennial) games, anxious to avert a public scandal, offered the emperor the prize for song and crown of eloquence, without the show of a contest. But Nero, protesting that he required no favour, insisted on being pitted against his rivals, and earning his honours by the sworn award of the judges. First, he simply recites a poem on the stage ; then, implored by the populace to exhibit all his accomplishments, he plays and dances before them, observing in every particular the rules prescribed to the performers, who must not sit down to rest themselves, nor wipe their brows with a handkerchief. Finally, bowing the knee, and making a professional salute, he awaited the judges' decision with a show of bashful apprehension.*<sup>1</sup> *And the populace too, wont to follow every movement of the actor with voice and gesture, cheered throughout in concert. They seemed to be really delighted ; and so perhaps they were, so reckless were they of the national dishonour. But the spectators from remoter burghs of Italy, still retaining some antique notions, those too from the prov-*

<sup>1</sup> Nero's vocal and musical powers are thus described in the dialogue which bears his name included in the works of Lucian. "His voice is unnaturally deep and hollow (comp. Lucan's jest, 'Sub terris tonuisse putes'), and seems to buzz in his throat with a disagreeable sound, which, however, he mitigates by modulating it carefully to music. His skill as a singer is not contemptible, except inasmuch as it is contemptible in an emperor to attend to such things at all. But when he enacts the part of the Gods, how ludicrous he is ! yawn the hearers must, in spite of a thousand perils. For he nods, drawing a long breath, squares his toes, raises himself to the utmost, and bends back like a man bound to the wheel. Naturally of a sanguine complexion, his visage now glows with a deeper red." Then follows the story of a tragedian, who persisted in contending for the prize against him, with great applause from the audience, but much to Nero's mortification, who set on some of the players to attack him and beat him to death.

*inces who were strangers to the abandoned habits of the city, were ashamed and affronted; and these, when they refused to clap their hands, and even hindered the hired applauders, were beaten by the soldiers posted among the seats. Many knights were trodden down in trying to make their way out: others were seriously injured by keeping their places a day and a night without intermission, fearing to be denounced if they absented themselves for a moment, by spies set to watch every movement even of their countenances. Of the poorer sort, indeed, many were punished on this account on the spot: against the nobler the ill-will of the emperor was treasured for future manifestation.<sup>1</sup>*

*After the conclusion of the games died Poppæa, from the chance violence of her husband, who kicked her when in a state of pregnancy: for I cannot believe in the story of poison, though asserted by some writers, from mere hatred, as I believe, to Nero; for he was anxious for children, and greatly enamoured of his wife. Her body was not consumed by fire, as is the Roman custom; but embalmed after the manner of foreign kings, and thus introduced into the sepulchre of the Julii. The obsequies, however, were publicly solemnized, and Nero himself pronounced her eulogy from the rostrum, praising her beauty, declaring that she was the mother of a divine infant (a daughter she had lately borne him, already dead), and representing her other gifts of fortune in the light of personal merits.<sup>2</sup>*

Death of Poppæa. Divine honours paid to her.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 6.: Suet. *Ner.* 35.: Dion, lxii. 27. Our author does not mention, though he afterwards alludes to the fact as if mentioned, that the senate decreed divine honours to Poppæa. Embalming, after the fashion of the Egyptians and the Greek sovereigns in the East, from a symbol of immortality easily slid into a symbol of divinity. Pliny has a remarkable statement that the amount of spices consumed at Poppæa's funeral exceeded a whole year's produce of Arabia (xii. 41.). This would naturally be understood to refer to the burning of her body, and the critics are perplexed at the apparent discrepancy between the two authors, nor do I think they are successful in reconciling them. I fear it must be considered one of the blunders which Pliny, in his haste and indiscriminate appetite for miscellaneous information,



*The death of Poppæa, much mourned in public, not less blest in secret from the sense of her shamelessness and cruelty, was the more bitterly considered from Nero's forbidding C. Cassius to appear at her funeral. This was the first sign of the coming evil, which was not long delayed. Silanus was included in the same proscription; with no charge against either, except that Cassius was eminent for ancestral wealth and high consideration, Silanus for illustrious birth and youthful modesty. Such were the crimes for which Nero sent a message to the senate, in which he insisted that they should both be removed from the commonwealth, objecting to Cassius that among the images of his ancestors he venerated the bust of the tyrannicide inscribed the Party-Leader. This, he said, was to sow the seeds of a civil war, to urge a revolt against the family of the Cæsars. Moreover he had attached to himself Silanus, a restless and turbulent stripling, to lure the disaffected to rebellion. Silanus, he declared, had presumed already to promise posts and places: a charge as frivolous as false; for Silanus, thoroughly cowed by the death of his uncle Torquatus, was only anxious to secure his own safety. But further, the prince suborned delators to accuse Lepida, the wife of Cassius and aunt to Silanus, of incestuous intercourse with her nephew, and the practice of magical rites. Certain senators, Vulcatius and Marcellus, and a knight, Calpurnius Fabatus, were arrested as his accomplices; these men, however, got a respite by appealing to the prince, and eventually escaped, from their insignificance, among the greater crimi-*

Proscription of  
C. Cassius and  
L. Silanus.

has too often committed. With this memento before us we may allow some distrust of another statement also, that Poppæa was always followed by a troop of five hundred she-asses to provide her a bath of milk, as a cosmetic, daily. That her mules were shod with gold we may, if we please, admit. It should be observed that Dion's repetition of these stories is no confirmation of them. It is remarkable that Josephus (*Antiq. Jud.* xx. 7. 11.) calls this wretched creature "a devout woman," θεοσεβὴς γὰρ ἦν. Perhaps she patronized the Jewish freedmen connected with the palace; possibly she discountenanced the Christian converts. Josephus was, however, under some personal obligations to her. See Joseph. *Vit.* 3. On this point more will be said in another place.

nals by whom Nero's attention was engaged. On Cassius and Silanus exile was pronounced by decree of the senate. Lepida was left to the emperor's judgment. Cassius was transported to Sardinia to die there of old age: Silanus was removed to Ostia to be sent to Naxos; but he was presently confined in Barium, a town of Apulia. While enduring there his undeserved misfortune with the fortitude of a philosopher, he was laid hands on by a centurion under orders to kill him. He declared himself well prepared to die, but he would not suffer a cut-throat to claim the honour of slaying him. Such, though unarmed, were his vigour and resolution that the centurion was obliged to call his men to hold him; yet he struggled against him with his bare hands till despatched at last with cut and thrust, as if in regular combat.<sup>1</sup>

Nor less sudden was the destruction of Lucius Vetus, his mother-in-law Sextia, and his daughter Pollutia, objects of hatred to the prince because their mere existence seemed to reproach him with the slaughter of Rubellius Plautus, the son-in-law of Vetus.<sup>2</sup> Nero first discovered his feelings on hearing the delation of Fortunatus, a freedman of Vetus, and of Claudius Demianus, a man whom Vetus, when proconsul of Asia, had cast into prison for his crimes. When the accused was informed of the kind of witnesses who were pitted against him, he quits Rome for his Formian villa. Soldiers are sent to surround and watch him at a distance. His daughter was with him, still brooding over the recollection of her husband's death, of the murder she had herself witnessed, of the severed head she had embraced. She preserved his blood-stained garments as a widow and a mourner, taking only meat and drink sufficient to sustain her alive. At her father's desire she now re-

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 7-9. This was the L. Junius Torquatus Silanus referred to in a preceding note.

<sup>2</sup> This L. Vetus is mentioned in *Ann.* xiv. 58. by the name of L. Antistius. He was consul with Nero in the first year of his reign, A. D. 55. He commanded afterwards in the Upper Germany, and proposed to connect the Rhine and Saone with a canal. *Ann.* xiii. 53. See above, ch. li.

*pairs to the emperor at Naples, and access being denied her, haunts his door to extort an audience, calling on him to hear the innocent, not to surrender to a freedman his own colleague in the consulship, sometimes with womanish lamentations, and again, casting off her sex, with threats and frantic violence, till the prince's obduracy moved the disgust of all beholders. Then at last she bids her father abandon hope, and bear what is beyond help. The trial, he hears, is impending, and a severe sentence prepared. Friends advised him to make Cæsar heir to the bulk of his property, and secure, perchance, the remainder for his grandchildren. But this counsel he rejected, and least by a last act of base submission, he should disgrace a life which had bordered on independence, first divided his money and furniture among his slaves—all but three couches retained for a triple bier;—then himself, his daughter, and his mother, together in one chamber, with the same steel sever one another's veins;—wrapped each, for decency, in a single blanket, they are laid hastily in the vapour-bath, each gazing on the others and praying to be the first to die, and leave the others dying yet still alive. And fortune maintained the proper order: the elders died first and last the latest born. They were tried after their burial: it was decreed that they should suffer after the manner of the ancients. Nero pretended to forbid this severity, allowing them forsooth to die in private: such was the mockery super-added after they were dead and gone.*

*Publius Gallus, a Roman knight, was interdicted fire and water, because he had been intimate with Fenius Rufus, and on no distant terms with Vetus. The freedman and accuser were rewarded for their pains with seats in the theatre among the tribune's attendants. And the month which followed April (called now Neronian) was changed from Maius to Claudius, while June assumed the name of Germanicus, because, as Cornelius Orfitus in proposing the change declared, the name of Junius had been rendered ominous by the deaths of two guilty Torquati.*

Name of the month Maius changed to Claudius, and Junius to Germanicus.



*This year, disgraced by so many deeds of horror, was further distinguished by the Gods with storms and sicknesses.*

Campania and the neighbourhood of Rome ravaged by storms and pestilence.

*Campania was devastated by a hurricane which overthrew buildings, trees, and the fruits of the soil in every direction, even to the gates of the city, within which a pestilence thinned all ranks of the population, with no atmospheric disturbance that the eye could trace. The houses were choked with dead, the roads with funerals: neither sex nor age escaped. Slaves and free men perished equally amidst the wailings of their wives and children, who were often hurried to the pyre by which they had sate in tears, and consumed together with them. The deaths of knights and senators, promiscuous as they were, deserved the less to be lamented, inasmuch as falling by the common lot of mortality they seemed to anticipate the prince's cruelty.<sup>1</sup>*

We have seen in these extracts a graphic representation of the mingled farce and tragedy which one man's wantonness, and the supineness of the million, allowed to be inflicted on the great Roman people; and the disaster with which it concludes, the visitation of a superior Providence, though in the actual amount of suffering far more terrible, is felt as a relief because at least it brought with it no stigma upon humanity. The thirty thousand victims who were registered in this single autumn in the temple of Libitina, may be compared with twice that number entered in the bills of mortality in the course of eighteen months in the great plague of London.<sup>2</sup>

Melancholy reflections of Tacitus on his task as an historian.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 10-13. The account of this year concludes with a notice of the prince's liberality to the city of Lugdunum, to which he repaid a large sum it had formerly presented to Rome, on the occasion perhaps of the fire. Read with Ritter *urbis* for *turbidis* (casibus), and comp. xv. 45. "conferendis pecuniis pervastata Italia, provinciæ eversæ," &c.

<sup>2</sup> Comp. Suet. *Ner.* 39.: "Pestilentia unius auctumni quo triginta millia ad rationem Libitinæ venerunt." It is needless to say that this statement affords no adequate ground for calculating, with Brotier and others, the population of Rome; but it is important as showing the care and method with which the register of deaths was kept.

But Nero, who it seems had fled from the contagion to his Campanian watering-places, still continued to exercise the same cruelty as before, and the year 819 commenced with another iniquitous process, which destroyed two nobles, one of them a son of Ostorius Scapula, himself a soldier of reputation.<sup>1</sup> He was already afraid of his own officers, of the men of action, not of words, the men who swayed the affection of the legions to which his own person was unknown. Here Tacitus pauses for a moment, as if overcome by the horror of his subject, and embodies in despairing language his distress at the prostration of his countrymen's energies, while he justifies the sad interest with which he still lingers over it. *Even, he says, were I relating foreign wars, and deaths endured for the republic, I should both fatigue myself and expect to fatigue my readers with the same unvaried tale of sad though not dishonourable ends. But now the servile patience of the sufferers, and the loss of so much blood at home, oppress the soul and overwhelm it with melancholy. Nor would I ask of those to whom these horrors shall become known any other indulgence for the wretches who perished so pusillanimously, but to refrain from detesting them. It was the wrath of the Gods against the Roman state; not such as, in the case of armies worsted or cities taken, may once be noted, and then passed over in silence. We owe it to the posterity of illustrious nobles to recount all their deaths separately, just as the obsequies of each are distinguished from the common herd of funerals.*<sup>2</sup> And so, with these bitter words, he returns again to his task, and proceeds with dogged endurance to record the names and fortunes of the sufferers of the years which followed. A chance which he did not anticipate, but which he would hardly have regretted, has abridged the story of these gloomy times, and confined the remaining pages of our author's annals to little more than

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 16.: "Detur hoc illustrium virorum posteritati, ut quomodo exsequiis a promiscua sepultura separantur, ita in traditione supremorum accipiant habeantque propriam memoriam."

a single subject, to which we, too, must follow him with respect and sympathy.

Before, however, we proceed to the crowning enormity of the death of Thræsea, another proscription must be noticed, partly as involving one name at least of historical notoriety, partly as illustrating the horrors under which the Roman nobles at this time lived and perished. Death of Annæus Mela, father of Lucan. Annæus Mela, Rufius Crispinus, Anicius Cerialis, and C. Petronius were involved in the same fate almost at the same moment. Crispinus, it seems, was a public character; he had been præfect of the prætorians and worn the consular ornaments; such being the case he became an object of jealousy to aspiring courtiers, and liable to false accusation. Charged accordingly with participation in some recent conspiracy, probably that of Piso, he had been banished to Sardinia, where he soon put an end to his own life. But Mela had preferred a private station to the perils of a more conspicuous career.<sup>1</sup> This man was the brother of Gallio and Seneca, and seems to have partaken of the Epicurean indifference of the one, together with the love of money which casts a stigma on the other. Not seeking to rise above the rank of knight-hood, he had amassed wealth for himself while replenishing the imperial fiscus in the provinces. He was father, how-

<sup>1</sup> I have mentioned the three sons of M. Annæus Seneca the rhetorician in chapter xli.: "docti Senecæ ter numeranda domus."—Mart. iv. 40. Of these Novatus took the name of Gallio after adoption by M. Junius Gallio. He is generally supposed to be the Gallio mentioned in *Acts* xviii. 12. as proconsul of Achaia under Claudius. His mildness of character ("caring for none of these things") is referred to by Statius (*Sylv.* ii. 7. 32.): "dulcem generasse Gallionem;" and by Seneca (*Nat. Qu.* præf. iv.): "quem nemo non parum amat, etiam qui amare plus non potest;" the false brilliancy of his style by Tacitus (*de Orat.* 26.): "tinnitus Gallionis." The brothers seem to have been all addicted to letters. I know not why M. Nisard, in his *Etudes sur les Poètes latins* (i. 89.), in advancing his theory that the Tragedies which go under the name of Seneca were written by different members of the family (*Senecanum opus*, he calls them), excludes Gallio from the partnership. M. Nisard cannot inform us how the authorship of the several plays is to be distributed, except that he gives the *Octavia*, as the worst, decidedly to Lucan. I think myself that there is strong evidence of L. Seneca being author of some at least of them.



ever, to Lucan, a relation which, however honourable, exposed him to danger and led ultimately to his ruin. After his son's death, he had shown, it is said, peculiar keenness in collecting the debts due to him, and in so doing had offended a certain Fabius Rusticus, who charged him in revenge with complicity in the crime. His wealth insured his condemnation. Forged letters were produced, a case of Majestas was vamped up, and Mela, after bequeathing a large part of his estates to Tigellinus, in hope of preserving the remnant for his heirs, shrank from the anxiety of a trial by opening his own veins. But to his last will he had appended a word of complaint at being thus compelled to die in his innocence, while Crispinus and Cerialis, the prince's real enemies, were allowed to survive him. The first indeed, as we have seen, had already destroyed himself: the other, on finding his own life menaced, speedily took the same course. Petronius, who was sacrificed to the jealousy of Tigellinus, seems to have been a man of more remarkable character than any of these. His sentiments and habits were those of a Mæcenas, transferred to a corrupter age, and confined to a lower sphere. He had governed Bithynia, and become subsequently consul; and in these high offices he had shown, like his trusty prototype, activity and vigilance. But when released from public trammels, choice and policy combined to dispose him to the enjoyment of ease and luxury in a private station: his days were passed in slumber, his nights devoted to genial dissipation. If he still occupied a large space in the eyes of the citizens, it was owing to his refined taste, to the exquisiteness of his luxury, and the elegance of his debauches; and all he said and did was repeated with admiration of his studied ease, or, to borrow a phrase of his own, its *curious felicity*. Petronius was admitted, with the choicest profligates of the day, to the prince's intimacy, and stood so high in his confidence as to be entitled the Arbiter of the Imperial Pleasures. Nothing was graceful, nothing was admired in luxury, but what had the stamp of his approbation. But here he invaded the

Character and  
death of Pe-  
tronus.

province coveted by Tigellinus. Two favourites could not sit so near the throne together. Tigellinus proved the craftier: he accused his rival of a guilty intimacy with the traitor Scævinius, and having suborned a slave to depose against him, deprived him by an adroit manœuvre of the means of defence. Nero was at the time in Campania, and Petronius was seized on his way to visit him, and detained far from all assistance at Cumæ. We hear no more in this age of the judicial contests of the delators under Tiberius. Accusers had not now the opportunity of making themselves famous for their oratory. Their hateful trade was no longer gilded even by the false glory of eloquence. Petronius, like so many others, resolved at once to anticipate trial and sentence by suicide. The manner indeed in which he proceeded to yield his life was singular. Summoning his friends to his presence, he opened his veins in the course of their conversation, bound them, and opened them again, as its interest warmed or languished. But their talk was not of matters of philosophy or the question of the soul's immortality: they only recited trifling compositions, and improvised verses. To some of his slaves he made presents, others he caused to be punished. He lay down to supper, composed himself to sleep, and sought to give his death the appearance, and if possible the sensations, of a natural end. In his will he refused to follow the mode of flattering the emperor or his creatures, and filled a codicil with the indignant recital of their enormities. He signed and sealed, and transmitted this document to the tyrant. Finally, he broke his signet, that it might never again be used to bring the guiltless into peril; and dashed in pieces a costly murrhine vase, to deprive Nero of the relic which he knew him most ardently to covet.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xxxvii. 7. As regards the authorship of the *Satiricon*, which goes under the name of Petronius Arbiter, the reader may refer to the elaborate arguments of Studer in the *Rheinisches Museum*, 1843. This writer maintains the old view. He collects allusions to the age of Nero and the early emperors: as 1. in the reflections on the decline of eloquence, c. 1. (comp. the *Dial. de Orat.* c. 35.); 2. on the wealth and manners of freedmen (comp. Plin.

Our sole relief in tracing the bloody records of the Neronian tyranny is the reflection that its victims, ill-used as they were, were seldom worthy of a happier fate: in most at least of the cases we have noticed, they were among the basest, the most abandoned, and, when occasion offered, the most barbarous of their countrymen. We may presume that the indifference with which citizens, provincials, and slaves witnessed the massacre of their chiefs, their patrons, their masters, was derived from a strong sense of the iniquity of their career, their crimes and vices. We pay the tribute of a sigh to the fate of Britannicus and Octavia, innocent as they yet were in the first bloom of youth; but we confess that they too, had they been suffered to live a few years longer, would probably have lived to deserve all their sorrows. But the crowning crime of Nero was of a different stamp; for its victims were men of acknowledged honour and probity. *Nero at last, says Tacitus, yearned to destroy Virtue itself, in the persons of Pætus Thrasea and Barea Soranus.*

These two illustrious names have been thus joined together by Tacitus, and the connexion shall not be severed, though it does not appear that there was any alliance in blood or friendship between them, nor were they in fact involved in a common proscription. They were united in the protest of their noble lives against the iniquity of the times. Soranus had been pro-

Pætus Thrasea  
and Barea So-  
ranus.

*Hist. Nat.* xxxiii. 11., *Senec. Epist.* 27.); 3. on Orbitas (comp. *Senec. ad Marc.* 19. and alib., *Tac. Ann.* xiii. 52.); 4. in the names Mæcenatianus, Apelles, Menebrates (comp. *Suet. Calig.* 32, *Ner.* 30.); 5. in the estimate of Lucan as a poet; 6. in the verses on the civil wars; 7. in the reference to an invention for working glass with the hammer (comp. *Plin.* xxxvi. 26., *Dion.* lvii. 21.); 8. in the mention of the Vinum Opimianum and the Horti Pompeiani; 9. in the reference to the substitution of mosaic work for painting, c. 83. (comp. *Plin.* xxxi. 1.); 10. to the new fashion of anointing the feet, c. 70. introduced, according to Pliny, xiii. 3., under Nero. He further shows that the arguments of Niebuhr and others for placing the work later, i. e. in the time of the Antonines, the Severi, or even Constantine, are of no value, and, on the whole, leaves me tolerably confident that it belongs to the age of Nero, and was composed by Petronius, the "Arbiter elegantiarum" of that emperor.



consul in Asia, and had shown unusual consideration for the claims of the subject provincials. But besides being rebuked by his superior goodness, Nero had special grounds of mortification against him. He had refused to punish a city which had defended the statues of its gods against the commissioner sent by Nero to plunder it. He was marked for accusation by a needy delator. He was charged with intimacy with the culprit Rubellius Plantus, and with treasonable intrigues in his province. Against Thræsea the charges were still more vague than these. This man was eminent among the Stoics, the sect then most in vogue among the Roman nobility; and even the stern thoughtful air and sober garb which became his profession, were felt as a reproach to the frivolous dissipation of the prince and his flatterers.<sup>1</sup> His household was regulated with antique simplicity: his wife, the child of the heroic Arria, was wise and patient; his son-in-law, Helvidius Priscus, was brave and generous; he was admired by the gentle Persius, a philosopher without conceit, and a satirist without gall.<sup>2</sup> All his public acts, for he was a senator and had held high office, were remarked by the bad with mortification, by the good with undisguised triumph. When the cruel motion was made in the senate against the memory of Agrippina, Thræsea had retired without giving his vote: in the Neronian games, when so many nobles had disgraced themselves by unworthy compliances, Thræsea had stiffly declined; an offence the more pointed because in the Antenorians games at his own city Patavium, he had relaxed, as a Greek among Greeks, and taken part in the acting and singing.<sup>3</sup> He had interfered to moderate the fierce flattery of the senate, when it would have put Antistius to death for raillery against

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 37.: "Thrasæ objectum est tristior et pædagogi vultus."

<sup>2</sup> The scholiast on Persius informs us that the poet was kinsman to Arria. Rupert. in Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 34. It is conjectured that Thræsea belonged to the Gens Fannia.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 21.: "Parum expectabilem operam præbuerat:" "he had not done what was required of him." It has been explained elsewhere how the proud Roman of the city deigned to make himself a mere Greek in the holidays in the country.

the emperor. Again, when divine honours were decreed to Poppæa, he had abstained from attending her obsequies.<sup>1</sup> Capito Cossutianus, the son-in-law of Tigellinus, kept a note of all these delinquences, *partly from his own vicious hatred of virtue*, but still more, perhaps, for the effectual aid Thræsea had lent to certain envoys from Cilicia, who had been sent to Rome to charge him with oppression in their province.

Nor was this all: the conduct of the stern republican had been marked by still increasing symptoms of political disgust, which could not fail to be noticed. His admirers in the next generation related with a glow of satisfaction how Thræsea and Helvidius were wont to pledge each other, crowned with festal chaplets, on the birthdays of Brutus and Cassius;<sup>2</sup> but whether this were so or not, the detractors of his own day remarked, with a shrug, that he had shunned making oath to the emperor at the commencement of the year; that though a quindecimvir, he had failed to offer vows for his safety; that he had never sacrificed for his health, or for the preservation of *his heavenly voice*: once a constant attendant in the senate-house, he had for three years refrained from entering it: lately when the fathers had rushed to condemn Vetus and Silanus, he had pleaded clients' business to keep away. This, it was said, was secession from public life; this was faction: if many chose to do the same, it would be dissension, it would be civil war. In their proneness to party contentions, people, it was muttered, were beginning to talk forsooth of *Nero and Thræsea*, as formerly of Cæsar and Cato. *Followers he has,*

Frivolous  
charges against  
Thræsea.

<sup>1</sup> That divine honours were decreed to Poppæa, though not before stated by Tacitus, appears also from Dion, lxi. 26. Her temple was dedicated by Nero, inscribed with the epigraph, "Sabinae Deæ Veneri matronæ fecerunt." Eekhel, *Doctr. Numm.* vi. 287., gives two coins inscribed on one side to "Diva Claudia," the infant daughter, on the other to "Diva Poppæa Augusta."

<sup>2</sup> Juvenal, v. 36.:—

"Quale coronati Thræsea Helvidiusque bibebant  
Brutorum et Cassi natalibus."

The respect in which Thræsea was held by later generations is strongly marked in the epistles of the younger Pliny. See vii. 19., viii. 22.

it was added, *who affect his dress and manners, if not yet the perverseness of his opinions ; and reflect on the genial laxity of the prince by their sourness and solemnity. By him alone the life of Cæsar, his accomplishment, his genius, are held in no honour. To believe Poppæa no goddess, evinced the same evil spirit as to withhold approval from the acts of the divine Julius and the divine Augustus. The journals of the Senate were read in the provinces and the camps, only to discover the motions which Thræsea refused to sanction. The sect to which he belonged had been ever the patron of a faction ; it had numbered a Tubero and a Favonius, names distasteful even to the republic. Such are the men who now set up the name of Liberty as a plea for overthrowing the empire : should they succeed in overthrowing it, they will soon attack liberty itself. . . .* These insinuations easily inflamed the fury of Nero, and he encouraged Capito to proceed with his impeachment with the aid of another vehement delator, Eprius Marcellus.<sup>1</sup>

The reader will have remarked that hitherto the victims of Nero had almost all perished in private. Either he had made use of secret assassination, or threats alone had sufficed to drive his enemies to suicide in the recesses of their own houses. Slowly, and from confused and doubtful whisperings, had the people learnt for the most part the fate of Agrippina and Britannicus, of Octavia, Cassius, and Silanus. Such deeds were not exhibited in public, such records were not written in contemporary history. The sensibility of that excitable populace was little affected by mutterings of horrors removed actually from their sight, or softened to their imaginations by the lapse of time. This was no doubt the secret of Nero's policy, which enabled him to break all his pledges to justice and humanity, and gave impunity to crimes which posterity has so deservedly execrated. But in the cases now before us, the threats of the accusers seemed to be of no avail, and the emperor was prevailed on to consent, not

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 22.



without apprehension, to the course of a public prosecution. A moment was adroitly seized to carry through the process when attention was absorbed in a matter of casual interest. Tiridates, a claimant to the throne of Armenia, came to Rome to receive the diadem from the hand of the emperor. To dispose of foreign crowns was the pride of the senate and its chiefs, and here a rival potentate was stooping to receive the gift. Nero, with no conquests of his own to boast of, was eager to make a grand display of his dignity and power.<sup>1</sup> The citizens, with their increasing frivolity and love for shows and ceremonies, were gloating over the meeting of the prince and the king, when Thrasea and Soranus were both suddenly denounced. Thrasea desired an interview with the emperor: this being refused, he addressed him by letter, pledging himself to refute every accusation, and requiring only to be confronted with his accuser. Nero had eagerly seized the paper in which he hoped to read an avowal of guilt, accompanied with an abject submission. Disappointed in this anticipation, he resolved with mortified vanity to let the impeachment proceed, and summoned the senate to hear and pronounce upon it.

On the circumstances of this illustrious sacrifice Tacitus dwells with peculiar solemnity. He sets before us, as in a discussion of the friends of Thrasea, the arguments which were doubtless often in the mouths of the sufferers of those days and their anxious associates, for defying the delator with a bold though hopeless defence, or for submitting in silence to the inevitable sentence. On the one hand, those who urged the

Thrasea discusses with his friends the course he should adopt.

<sup>1</sup> Suetonius, *Ner.* 13., describes the ceremony. Nero wore triumphal robes, surrounded by troops, and the whole solemnity bore a military character. At the close the soldiers saluted him with the title of Imperator, and his laurels were offered to Jupiter in the Capitol. This presumed victory was followed by the closing of the temple of Janus. Comp. the medals on which the closing of Janus is recorded, as given by Eckhel, vi. 273., which must overrule the conflicting statement of Orosius, though professing to be taken from Tacitus, that Janus was never closed between Augustus and Vespasian.—Oros. vii. 3.

accused to present himself in the senate-house declared their conviction that his constancy would not fail him; he would say nothing but what would enhance his reputation. . . . *Let the citizens behold him confronting the terrors of death: let the fathers hear his words, the words of a god rather than of a man: possibly even Nero himself might be moved by the eloquence of inspiration: at least, should he persist in his cruelty, posterity would distinguish this example of a worthy death from the cowardice of those who let themselves perish in silence.* . . . On the other hand, some advised him to await the event in his own chamber. To his virtue and constancy they paid the same tribute as the first speakers; but they warned him of the insults he might have to undergo; the railing of his accusers might be followed by the revilings, and even the blows, of the servile crowd around them. . . . *Let him relieve the senate from the infamy of such a crime; let him leave it undetermined what the fathers would venture to decree against Thræsea at their bar. That Nero would be made to blush there was no hope whatever; but defiance might goad him to further cruelties against his victim's children.* But the counsels of the anxious band were not solely confined to considerations of dignity or expediency. One at least among them, the young Arulenus Rusticus, offered at all risks to intercede, as tribune of the people, and exercise the ancient right of his office to quash the decree of the senate. He was only restrained by the mild prudence of Thræsea himself, who pronounced that now, on the threshold of a public career, it was his duty not to throw away his life to no purpose, but reserve it for the chance of future usefulness.<sup>1</sup>

Every suggestion invited and affably considered, the sage withdrew to make his final determination in private. Meanwhile, the proceedings of his enemies were carried on impetuously. The next morning two prætorian cohorts occupied the temple of Venus Genetrie, whither the senate was summoned. The ap-

Proceedings  
against him in  
the senate.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 25, 26.

proaches were thronged by bands of gowned citizens, sword in hand, while soldiers were posted in the forums and halls around; it was amidst the scowls and threats of these terrible bystanders that the fathers entered the Curia. A message from the emperor was delivered. It contained a general complaint against the senators for deserting their posts, and preferring the ease of their suburban pleasantries to the fatigues of public duty. This was the theme on which the accusers spoke. Thrasea and Helvidius in the first instance, next to them Paconius Agrippinus and Curtius Montanus, as known objects of the prince's jealousy, were charged with this dereliction of their senatorial duties, ascribed to a contumacious and treasonable disgust towards the government. To Thrasea, it was asserted, the peace of the world, and the victories of the empire, were equally distasteful. The forums, the temples, the theatres, wherever, in short, the Roman people congregated most for duties or amusements, he shunned alike, as though they were solitudes uninhabitable to man. He had snapped the social bonds of rank and profession; he had abandoned the Roman commonwealth; let him die the death, and make the unholy divorce final and complete.

The declamation of Marcellus was loud and passionate; and the senate, terrified beyond its wont by the threatening sights around it, succumbed impotently to its fury. Nevertheless, so deep was the compassion for the blameless virtue of Thrasea, the gallant bravery of Helvidius, the guileless innocence of Agrippinus and Montanus, that when the harangue of the accuser ended, it still sate motionless and silent. Then uprose Sabinus to advance his charges against Soranus, and with the treasons he imputed to the father he combined a charge of unholy divination against his young and widowed daughter. Servilia, such was the matron's name, admitted that she had consulted the sorcerers as to the fate impending on her sire; but she had conceived no imprecations on the prince; for his safety she had always prayed; in the ardour of her feminine devotion she had ever mentioned his name among the gods whom she in-

Charges against  
Soranus.



voked. Soranus avouched her innocence with passionate exclamations: with his acts, whatever their colour might be, he showed that she was in no way connected. But the charges against both were pressed with redoubled vehemence. Among the most conspicuous of the witnesses against Soranus was Egnatius, his client and the professed imitator of his conduct and opinions. The senate was moved with more than common disgust at the sight of a man who professed himself among the straitest of the Stoics, denouncing the noblest model of his own sect.<sup>1</sup>

The accusers, however, were completely successful. After a short pause, which gave room for one example of generous devotion in the person of Cassius Asclepiodotus, a foreigner, once the client and now the defender of Soranus, the senate decreed death, allowing only the choice of death to themselves, against Thræsea, Soranus, and Servilia. Helvidius and Paconius were to be banished from Italy. Montanus was only declared incapable of all public functions as a citizen. Marcellus and Cossutianus, on the other hand, were rewarded with largesses and honours. The whole day had been consumed in this double process. It was already evening when the quæstor of the consul arrived with the fatal intelligence before the door of Thræsea, who, it seems, had remained quietly at home, and was entertaining a number of distinguished friends, both male and female. He was engaged more particularly in a discourse with the Cynic Demetrius, and from the solemnity of his gestures as well as from words which were overheard from him, it was supposed that the topic of their discussion was the nature of the soul, and the independence of mind and body. Amidst the tears and groans of the company, to whom the message was quickly communicated, Thræsea contented himself with urging them not to incur danger on his behalf, and forbade his wife to follow the example of the elder Arria, bidding her live for the

<sup>1</sup> The crime of Egnatius furnished a standing example of unnatural perfidy to the satirists. "Stoicus occidit Baream, delator amicum." *Juv. Sat.* iii. 116.

last solace and protection of their only daughter. Then going forth, he met the messenger of death, and received from his hands the decree of the senate. He rejoiced to find that Helvidius was spared. Taking the young man, together with Demetrius, into his chamber, he held out his arms to the operator, and dashing on the ground the first blood that started, *A libation*, he exclaimed, *to Jove the Deliver! Look, young man*, he added, *and heaven avert the omen! but in the age to which you are born, it behoves men to confirm their own courage by beholding fortitude in others.*<sup>1</sup> And here,—with only the addition that his pains were long, and that he turned towards Demetrius,—the last sentence of the historian is suddenly interrupted: our manuscripts of this part of Tacitus have come to us from a single copy, and the chance which has torn off some few leaves, perhaps, from the end of a volume, has broken the thread of a narrative, so painfully interesting, so solemnly instructive. The interest is common to all mankind who can sympathize in the sorrows and virtues of the noblest of their species: the instruction is for those who can gather from these agonizing details the warnings or consolations they are fitted to impart. In the following chapter we shall enter upon an examination of the state of thought and sentiment at Rome at this period, which may help us, perhaps, to unriddle some of the perplexing questions which have been opened but not solved for us in the narrative of the historians.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. ult.

## CHAPTER LIV.

CONSIDERATION OF THE CAUSES WHICH INDUCED THE ROMANS TO ENDURE THE TYRANNY OF THE EMPERORS.—FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND EDUCATION ALLOWED BY IT ACCEPTED AS A COMPENSATION FOR RESTRAINTS ON POLITICAL ACTION.—TOLERATION OF PHILOSOPHY.—OPPOSITION OF THE STOICS TO THE GOVERNMENT: THEIR CHARACTER AND POSITION IN THE COMMONWEALTH.—STATE OF RELIGION AT ROME: SUPPRESSION OF THE GAULISH SUPERSTITIONS: ENCROACHMENT OF ORIENTAL CULTS.—PROSCRIPTION OF THE SYRIAN AND EGYPTIAN PRIESTHOODS.—JUDAISM BECOMES FASHIONABLE AT ROME: INTRODUCED AMONG THE FREEDMEN OF THE PALACE.—TURBULENCE AND PROSCRIPTION OF THE JEWS AT ROME.—FIRST RECEPTION OF CHRISTIAN IDEAS AMONG THEM.—ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.—HIS ARRIVAL AND PREACHING AT ROME.—PERSECUTION OF THE "CHRISTIANS."—QUESTION OF THE APPLICATION OF THIS NAME BY TACITUS.—THE TYRANNY OF THE EMPERORS SUPPORTED BY THE CORRUPTION OF THE AGE.—REFLECTIONS ON ROMAN VICE.—COUNTERACTING PRINCIPLES OF VIRTUE.—CHRISTIANITY ACCORDS WITH THE MORAL TENDENCIES OF THE AGE.—SENECA AND SAINT PAUL.—THE TEACHING OF SENECA MORAL, NOT POLITICAL.—PERSIUS AND LUCAN.

THE tyranny of Nero, and with it the tyranny of the Roman emperors,—that tyranny which has been held

Characteristics  
of the imperial  
tyranny.

up as a warning beacon to freemen for so many hundred years,—has now reached its climax: with Thræsea not a virtuous man, but Virtue itself, in the affected phrase of Tacitus, may seem to have been proscribed. Surveyed from a great distance in time and place, and from our point of view, unfamiliar as we happily are with the circumstances attending them, such atrocities as those recorded in our latter chapters seem to border on the incredible. It is not so much the barbarity of the despot,—released from all fear of God and overwhelmed at the same time with the fear of man,—as the patience of the subjects, that moves our wonder, and appears at first sight among the



most inscrutable problems of history. Every Roman was armed, and the military force at the prince's hand was of the most trifling description; every Roman vaunted himself of the same ruling race as the prince; his equal in intelligence, in theory at least his equal before the law. The emperor of the Romans stood absolutely alone at the head of his people. He had no society of tyrants of his own class, like the slave-owner, to support him: he had no foreign allies, like an autocrat in modern Europe, to maintain his authority as a bulwark to their own. Yet the attempts against the life or power of the Cæsars have been, as far as we have seen, comparatively few. They have generally been the work of private enemies or domestic traitors: those which have been contrived by public men, and for public ends, whether successful or not, have conciliated no sympathy from the multitude. To throw any light on this phenomenon, for such it may deserve to be called, we must look more deeply into the circumstances of the times, and the moral condition of the Roman world.

Of the enormities of Nero more particularly it has been already observed, but it may be well to repeat and enforce the observation, that they were comparatively unknown to the mass of the citizens. Some years of sincere benevolence and virtue, some more of discreet and thoughtful vigilance, had disposed the subjects of Nero to cherish a kindly feeling towards their ruler, and to reject as querulous declamation the vague and unproved charges of tyranny which they might sometimes hear made against him. To some crimes, real and manifest, they suffered themselves to be blinded. The Quinquennium of Nero could not be effaced at once from their memories. The remembrance of it has been among the most lasting monuments of the proneness of the Romans,—shall we not say of mankind in general?—to canonize the virtues of the great rather than to execrate their vices. We have seen, moreover, that the victims of Nero, unlike those of Caius or Tiberius, perished generally with closed doors. Though their crimes,

Its acts were generally shrouded in comparative privacy.

their sentences, and the manner of their deaths were discussed in the senate and recorded in the public archives, they were withdrawn at least from the public eye, and the story of their sufferings, when it reached at last the ears of the citizens, was less moving than if they had been witnessed in the open day. We must not judge too harshly of the shrinking from public exposure, or the hope of securing indulgence for a surviving family, which induced so many of the accused to anticipate the centurion's sword by suicide: yet the practice was not less really a crime against society; it riveted more strongly the tyranny of the despot, who might smile at being thus relieved from a portion of the odium due to him. Both Thræsea and Cato fell short of the dignity of suffering, the last and noblest lesson it was given them to teach. We must not wonder that the people showed little sympathy with the men who waived a dying appeal to their feelings, to their self-respect, to their love. They chose to die the death of slaves, when they might have approved themselves as martyrs, and it was as slaves rather than martyrs that they came to be regarded.<sup>1</sup>

But the Romans, it may be added, had they been more conscious of the cruelties thus perpetrated in the midst of them,—had they felt more keenly the pain and shame of the victims of the tyranny which overshadowed them,—would still have borne it with an apathy which it requires some effort to understand. For they were hardened against the sense of wrong and suffering by the viciousness of their own institutions, by their own personal habits and usages, by the daily practice of every house-

The idea of  
tyranny famil-  
iar to the Ro-  
mans.

<sup>1</sup> Several passages of contemporary writers express some bitterness at the desperation with which the best men threw away their lives. Thus Tacitus praises Agricola (*Agric.* c. 42.): "Quia non contumacia neque inani jactatione libertatis famam fatumque provocabat . . . sciant obsequium ac modestiam, si industria ac vigor adsint, eo laudis excedere quod plerique per abrupta, sed in nullum reipublicæ usum, ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt." *Comp. Ann.* iv. 20.; and Martial, i. 9.:

"Nolo virum facili redimit qui sanguine famam;  
Hunc volo laudari qui sine morte potest."

hold among them. Whenever the Roman entered his own dwelling, the slave chained in the doorway, the thongs hanging from the stairs, the marks of the iron and the cord on the faces of his domestics, all impressed him with the feeling that he was a despot himself; for despot and master were only other words for the same fearful thing, the irresponsible owner of a horde of human chattels.<sup>1</sup> When he seated himself in the circus, and beheld the combats of men with beasts, or of men with their fellow-men,—when he smelt the reeking fumes of blood which saffron odours could not allay, heard the groans of the wounded, and, appealed to with the last look of despair, gave ruthlessly the sign for slaughter,—he could not but be conscious of the same glow of pleasurable excitement at the sight of death and torture which is ascribed to the most ferocious of tyrants. Again, when he invaded a province as quæstor or proconsul, and set himself to amass a fortune without regard to duty or humanity, he felt, not without pride, that if among citizens he was a citizen, he was himself a king or an emperor among the subjects of the state. His own conscience would not suffer him to be indignant at any tyranny he witnessed. He had done as much or more himself. Tyranny was his own birthright: how could he resent its exercise in another? unless it immediately touched himself, what interest had he in resenting it? And for all the iniquities he himself practised, he had no doubt a salvo in his own breast. Slavery he firmly believed to be an eternal law of Nature. The free races were, he was assured, as gods to the servile races. He confessed the more readily, perhaps, that Cæsar was in some sense divine, inasmuch as he claimed to be himself of superior nature to the prostrate herds at his feet. But if Cæsar was divine, must he not acquiesce in Cæsar's sovereign authority?<sup>2</sup> An old state tra-

<sup>1</sup> The frightful stories of Vedius Pollio (Dion, liv. 23.), and Pedanius (Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 42.),—with which compare that of Largius Macedo (Plin. *Epist.* iii. 14.),—may suffice to show that the Roman masters were supported by the law in greater cruelties than any the Emperors practiced in defiance of it.

<sup>2</sup> If some were still inconsistent enough to complain of the loss of liberty,



dition pronounced that the massacres of the circus were politically expedient. That men should be hardened against fear by the frequent spectacle of death was a fixed principle in the moral creed of the Roman. Lastly, that Rome should rule the world seemed to him the final cause of creation.<sup>1</sup> He was not generally troubled by any slur thus cast upon Providence, as harsh and partial. He never thought of the moral government of the world as a system of mysterious wisdom and mercy, and it was no part of his philosophy to reconcile the jarring facts around him with the disposition of the Almighty Power to whom he gave the name of Best as well as of Greatest.

The ordinary notion of absolute government, derived from the form it assumes in Europe at the present day, is that of a strict system of prevention, which, by means of a powerful army, an ubiquitous police, and a censorship of letters, anticipates every manifestation of freedom in thought or action, from whence inconvenience may arise to it. But this was not the system of the Cæsarean Empire. Faithful to the traditions of the Free State, Augustus had quartered all his armies on the frontiers, and his successors were content with concentrating, cohort by cohort, a small though trusty force for their own protection in the capital. The legions were useful to the emperor, not as instruments for the repression of discontent at home, but as faithful auxiliaries among whom the most dangerous of his nobles might be relegated, in posts which

The Roman police repressive, not preventive.

Seneca could thus justly rebuke them: "Respondisse tibi servum indignasis, libertumque et uxorem et clientem; deinde de republica libertatem sublatam quereris, quam domi sustulisti."—Senec. *De Ira*, iii. 35.

<sup>1</sup> In such a case the evidence of a popular poet is worth more than that of a philosopher. Statius expounds the universal law of tyranny boldly and plainly, *Sylv.* iii. 3. 49.:

"Vice cuncta reguntur

Alternisque regunt: propriis sub regibus omnis

Terra; premit felix regum diademata Roma.

Hanc ducibus frænare datum; mox crescit in illos

Imperium Superis: sed habent et Numina legem."

were really no more than honourable exiles. Nor was the regular police of the city an engine of tyranny. Volunteers might be found in every rank to perform the duty of spies; but it was apparently no part of the functions of the guardians of the streets to watch the countenances of the citizens, or beset their privacy. We hear of no intrusion into private assemblies, no dispersion of crowds in the streets. It was generally deemed sufficient to divert the interest of the people from public affairs by supplying them with a constant variety of employment or dissipation, to amuse them, in their casual bursts of anger, by the sacrifice of some object of their aversion, to soothe their discontent by redoubled largesses, to allay their alarms of plague or famine by more extravagant shows and massacres in the circus. Or if at any time their murmurs took shape in action, or secret conspiracies against the government were detected, the arm of the emperor descended upon them swiftly and ruthlessly, and the severity of the punishment stunned and laid them in the dust.

Conscious of their power to repress disaffection, it was not therefore the policy of the emperors ostentatiously to prevent it. For this reason we find that they made no effort to impose restraints upon thought.

Freedom of thought among the Romans.

Freedom of thought may be checked in two ways, and modern despotism resorts in its restless jealousy to both. The one is, to guide ideas by seizing on the channels of education; the other, to subject their utterance to the control of a censorship. In neither one way nor the other did Augustus or Nero interfere at all. From the days of the republic the system of education had been perfectly untrammelled. It was simply a matter of arrangement between the parties directly interested, the teacher and the learner. Neither state nor church pretended to take any concern in it: neither priest nor magistrate regarded it with the slightest jealousy. Public opinion ranged, under ordinary circumstances, in perfect freedom, and under its unchecked influence both the aims and methods of education continued long to be admirably adapted to make

System of education independent of priests or magistrates.

intelligent men and useful citizens. The end of the highest education among the Romans was to fit a man for the discharge of his public duties. But, in theory at least, they took a very liberal view of public duty, and conceived that every thing which refined and enlarged his intellectual powers made him a wiser legislator and an abler magistrate. At the age of seven, or sometimes a few years later, the child began his course of public instruction on the benches of the Grammarian. From him he learned to read and speak his own language step by step with the Greek, and imbued his memory with the thoughts and language of the classics of either tongue, from Homer to Ennius or Virgil. At fourteen, or as soon as the powers of thought began to unfold themselves, he was transferred to the school of the Rhetorician, where he first began to concentrate his studies upon the future business of his life. He was to be made a public man, and therefore above all things a public speaker. He was to be trained for a perfect orator, by declamation, by writing, by careful study of the best models, by constant exercise in rivalry with his schoolfellows. But it was not the mere trick of action, or knack of speaking, that he was to acquire: he was to be thoroughly informed with the matter requisite for his calling. Every branch of knowledge might sometimes have its application: every art and science might serve on occasion to illustrate the topics presented to him for discussion: and, if any were too remote from the sphere of forensic eloquence, they would serve at least to expand the mind of the pupil, to give breadth and depth and height to his understanding. Among these sciences, however, there was one which held the highest place, one which for its pre-eminence among them deserved to be removed from the circle of the rhetorician's instructions, and entrusted to the care of a special teacher. At seventeen, or when the fated struggle begins between the moral principles and the instincts of appetite,—at the commencement, such as morality and religion have represented it, of the great battle of life between vice and virtue,—the youth was transferred to the academy

Its extent and  
liberality.



of the Philosopher or Sophist, to learn the mysteries of the Good, the Fair, and the Honourable.<sup>1</sup> While he still continued to exercise himself daily in rhetorical studies and practice, he explored the dark by-ways of morals and metaphysics under accomplished teachers; and traversed perhaps the whole circuit of Grecian speculation before he determined in which sect definitively to enrol himself.

Such a course of education, it must be allowed, was nobly conceived; and at the hands of the Romans it received fair play; for it was warped by no sectarian prejudices, nor confined by narrow notions of state policy. At first, indeed, the government looked with distrust on the new science of the rhetoricians, and the strange doctrines of the sophists from beyond the sea: the stern republic of Cato suspected the tendencies of a learning imported by the effeminate parasites of conquered Greece. But even these camp-prejudices were transient, and in the later times of the Free State the intellect of the Roman youth

High training  
of public men  
at Rome under  
the Free State.

was allowed to be developed without restraint, and undoubtedly with no common success. The Roman men of affairs were generally men of well-trained understandings. Their soldiers could speak and write as well as command. Their knowledge of ideas and letters was wide in its range, though perhaps their views had little depth, and still less originality. But there is something very remarkable in the ease with which they could turn from the active to the literary life, from study to composition, from speaking to speculation. With the fall of freedom the sphere of eloquence became lamentably restricted, and oratory degenerated into mere declamation: the subjects to which the learner was directed were frivolous, and the nature of his preparation in art was no doubt less discursive and complete.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, even under the empire, the education of youth bore honourable fruit. It created men of

Not materially  
lowered under  
the empire.

<sup>1</sup> Thus Persius, at twelve years, entered the school of the grammarian Pamelon; thence he went to the rhetor Virginius; and finally, at sixteen, to the philosopher Cornutus.—Suet. *vit. Pers.*

<sup>2</sup> For the subjects of declamation compare what has been said in chap. xli.;

letters if not practical statesmen; it sharpened the intellect, formed habits of industry, enlivened thought, and fostered a variety of interests, and an aptitude for manifold pursuits. It continued as before to be exercised with perfect freedom. The most jealous of the Cæsars made no attempt to control it, to dictate its subjects and prescribe its methods. Its textbooks were still, as ever, the most famous compositions of re-

Declamation in  
praise of lib-  
erty and tyrannicide.

publican Greece; the favourite topics of its declamations were the glories and virtues of the freemen of antiquity, and the praise of tyrannicide resounded from all its benches.<sup>1</sup> Even the milder method of guiding education, by enlisting salaried professors in the interest of the government, was not discovered till a later period; even then we shall find reason to question whether it was adopted as a precaution of state policy, or rather as a cheap subordination of flattery.

The same indulgence which was extended to education smiled upon the literature which flowed so copiously from it.

No restrictions  
on freedom of  
writing.

There was no restriction on writing or publication at Rome analogous to our censorships and licensing acts. The fact that books were copied by the hand, and not printed for general circulation, seems to

and see Tacitus, *Dial. de Orat.* 35.: "Sequitur ut materiæ abhorrenti a veritate declamatio quoque adhibeatur. Sic fit ut *tyrannicidarum præmia*, aut viatiarum electiones, aut pestilentiae remidia, aut incesta matrum, aut quicquid in schola quotidie agitur, in foro vel raro vel nunquam, ingentibus verbis persequuntur;" and Petron. *Satyr.* 1.: "Et ideo adulescentulos existimo in scholis stultissimos fieri, quia nihil ex iis quæ in usu habemus aut audiunt aut vident, sed piratas cum catenis in litore stantes, sed *tyrannos* edicta scribentes," &c.

<sup>1</sup> The well-known line of Juvenal,

"Cum perimit sævos classis numerosa tyrannos,"

is confirmed by Tacitus above cited, and by the subjects of some of the declamations ascribed to Quintilian, which have come down to us. The only exceptions to this licence of teaching mentioned in history, are the case of Carrinas Secundus, banished by Caius for declaiming in favour of tyrannicide (Dion, lix. 20.), and of the rhetor Virginus and the philosopher Musonius Rufus, proscribed by Nero, as Tacitus says, on account of their influence over youth, but ostensibly implicated in the conspiracy of Piso.—*Ann.* xv. 71.

present no real difficulty to the enforcement of such restrictions, had it been the wish of the government to enforce them. The noble Roman, indeed, surrounded by freedmen and clients of various ability, by rhetoricians and sophists, poets and declaimers, had within his own doors private aid for executing his literary projects; and when his work was compiled, he had in the slaves of his household the hands for multiplying copies, for dressing and binding them, and sending forth an edition, as we should say, of his work to the select public of his own class or society.<sup>1</sup> The circulation of compositions thus manipulated might be to some extent surreptitious and secret. But such a mode of proceeding was necessarily confined to few. The ordinary writer must have had recourse to a professional publisher, who undertook, as a tradesman, to present his work for profit to the world. Upon these agents the government might have had all the hold it required: yet it never demanded the sight beforehand of any speech, essay, or satire which was advertised as about to appear. It was still content to punish after publication what it deemed to be censurable excesses. Severe and arbitrary as some of its proceedings were in this respect, of which instances have been already recorded, it must be allowed that these prosecutions of written works were rare and exceptional, and that the traces we discover of the freedom of letters, even under the worst emperors, leave on the whole a strong impression of the general leniency of their policy in this particular.<sup>2</sup>

The fear, indeed, of such retrospective censorship had damped the ardour of men of letters through the dark days of Tiberius, and no man coveted eminence as a writer under the tyranny of his successor, who proscribed Homer and Virgil, and scowled with envious moroseness upon every kind of excellence. But Claudius was a patron of letters, perhaps not

This indulgence accepted in compensation for restriction upon public action.

<sup>1</sup> See Corn. Nep. *in Att.* 13.; Cic. *ad Att.* iv. 4. 5. 8., xiii. 12. 44.

<sup>2</sup> The patience of Nero under the bitterest pasquinades is remarked but not explained by Suetonius, *Ner.* 39.: "Mirum et vel præcipue notabile inter hæc



an unenlightened patriot. Historical composition flourished again under the auspices of the imperial historian. The accession of Nero, youthful and benign to every talent, was the signal for renewed activity in all departments of literature, particularly in the lighter, such as might expect special countenance from the favourite of Apollo. Undoubtedly the licence which was extended to writings at this period was accepted by the mass of the rising generation of educated men, as compensation for the restraints imposed on them in active life. While the interchange of thought was free, or appeared so, they might fondly persuade themselves that they were freemen themselves. Here, at least, the traditions of the republic were unbroken.

Nor are we to suppose that the circle of readers was so small that the government could safely despise the influence of an unpalatable composition. Whatever was its extent it was coincident, at least, with the class of which the government was naturally most jealous. The publications of Rome were perused no doubt by the senators, the knights, and the freedmen of the city: there is evidence to show that in many cases they penetrated far into the provinces, and for some kinds of writings, at least, there was a regular sale at Lugdunum, or any other provincial capital.<sup>1</sup> Some curious calculations have been made, to show that the rapidity with which copies could be multiplied by hand from dictation was little less than that of printing. It is not impossible that a limited number of copies, a hundred for instance, could be written

Consideration  
of the extent  
of the class of  
readers.

fuisset, nihil eum patientius quam maledicta et convicia hominum tulisse, neque in ullos leniorem, quam qui se dietis aut carminibus lacerassent, exstitisse." He proceeds to cite examples, some of which have been quoted in the preceding chapter.

<sup>1</sup> The authorities on this subject are collected, but with little critical discrimination, by Adolf Schmidt. *Denk und Glaubensfreiheit*, pp. 116. 125. The younger Pliny, as a metropolitan man of letters, imagined there could be no such thing as a bookseller at Lugdunum; he was the more pleased to learn that his own compositions were on sale there, among the latest publications of the trade at Rome. See *Epist.* ix. 11.

off quicker in this way in the librarian's workshop, than a single one could be set up in type by the printer. This, of course, supposes the employment of a multitude of scribes; but these were slaves cheaply purchased and maintained at little cost.<sup>1</sup> The exceedingly low price of books at Rome, if we may take the poems of a popular author as an example, show that the labour must have been much less or much cheaper than we usually imagine.<sup>2</sup> The world of Roman society, the circles of rank and fashion, in the city and its neighbourhood, were permeated by the published thoughts of their favourite writers with electric speed and electric diffusiveness.<sup>3</sup> It would be too much to dignify with the name of devotion to literature the aptitude of the educated Roman for the use of his style and tablets. No doubt the vice of the system of instruction imparted to him was its tendency to degenerate into the conning of facts, maxims, and the commonplaces of the schools, rather than the cultivation of thought. Trained from childhood to observe and imitate, he was versed in all the forms of literature, while he lacked perhaps the ideas to fill them. Hence the facility with which mere children, as in the cases more than once referred to, produced set orations on hackneyed subjects. With their

<sup>1</sup> Schmidt's remarks on this subject are well worth considering. He says boldly, "was in der Gegenwart für die Literatur die Presse ist, das war im Alterthum die Sklaverei," p. 119. Certainly the means possessed by the ancients for multiplying copies were far beyond those of the middle ages.

<sup>2</sup> For the exceeding cheapness of the most popular books see Martial, i. 118.: "Denariis tibi quinque Martialem." It would seem that a copy of one book at least of Martial (about 700 lines), smoothed with pumice, and elegantly bound, was sold for 3s. 4d.; a plainer copy (comp. i. 67.) for about 1s. 6d., or (xiii. 3.) even for 4d., and still leave a profit to the bookseller:

"Omnis in hoc gracili Xeniorum turba libello

Constabit nummis quatuor empti tibi.

Quatuor est nimium: poterit constare duobus;

Et faciet lucrum bibliopola Tryphon."

<sup>3</sup> One book of Martial (540 verses) could be transcribed in an hour (ii. 1. 5.): "hæc una peragit librarius hora." On the rapidity of writing Schmidt quotes Galen, *De Cogn. Morb.* e. 9., which shows that shorthand was in common use for published books. Schmidt, pp. 132. 136.

notebooks crammed with the accumulated jottings from a long course of dictations, they were prepared to produce, at short notice, passable exercitations on any ordinary topic. Ovid, speaking of the precocity of his poetical talent, tells us that in childhood his thoughts ran spontaneously in verse; and the phrases with which the tablets or the memory of the Romans were stored might seem of their own accord to take the form of continuous composition. Almost every distin-

Facilities attending the composition and multiplication of books.

guished man among them seems to have kept his journal or Ephemerides; to have made collections of wise and witty sayings; to have turned some of his observations on men and things into

verse; to have strung together a volume of miscellaneous extracts from his reading; and the transcription of a few copies of these stray leaves constituted the publication of

Characteristics of the popular literature of the time.

a book. With the character of the common literature of the day the Cæsarean government had every selfish reason to be satisfied. It was en-

grossing; it occupied many restless minds to the exclusion of all dangerous subjects, either of action or reflection. It seems to have been lively; it was, at least, fascinating. It was generally voluptuous, to enervate the strong and daring; it was satisfied with a low range of topics, leaving loftier themes to reserved and solitary genius. Such was the kind of literature in which Nero himself was ambitious of shining; such were the writings he could best appreciate. The few remaining verses which are ascribed to him, or supposed to be parodies upon him, seem to show that he was a proficient in the lilting metre and empty prettiness of expression which marked the poetical style of his tutor.<sup>1</sup> He is said, indeed, to have aspired to the fame of an historian, and to have taken for his subject the Affairs of Rome. His performance, however, never went beyond a consideration of the number of books to which the work should extend. The

<sup>1</sup> Seneca (*Nat. Qu.* i. 5.) quotes a verse of Nero's:—

“Colla Cytheriacæ splendent agitata columbæ.”

The well-known line in Persius, *Sat.* i., are not improbably parodies.



emperor, urged a flatterer, should not deign to compose less than four hundred volumes on the imperial theme. The Stoic Cornutus bluntly suggested that the public would not read a work so prolix. *Yet*, replied Nero, *your master Chrysippus wrote as many books. . . . But they at least*, returned the sage, *were of some use to mankind*.<sup>1</sup>

But whatever the truth of this story may be, the Romans of this age were not solely triflers in the drama, in epigram and fugitive poetry; men were found not only to write but to read vast compilations of history, Fashion of historical composition. now known to us only by the number of volumes they are said to have filled. The works of the emperor Claudius, of Servilius Nonianus, and Aufidius Bassus, attest the patient labour of these men of letters; men who must have looked for reputation rather from the recitation of their compositions, book by book, to select audiences, than to their wide dissemination by the labour of copyists. An account of the life and studies of the elder Pliny, the type of Roman industry at the same time both in affairs and letters, will find its proper place at a later period; Extraordinary literary activity of the elder Pliny. but we may here remark that during the reign of Nero this distinguished man, after holding for many years a military command in Germany, was devoting himself to study in retirement, meditating a history of the German wars which he deemed it inexpedient to put on paper in times of tyranny, composing a work on grammar and a treatise on the literary life, accumulating extracts from his reading or notes of his thoughts and conversation which extended at his death to a hundred and sixty volumes, and preparing slowly and methodically, from the perusal of many hundreds of works, the wonderful encyclopædia of Roman arts and learning which he published eventually under the name of the *Natural History*.

The noble Roman chafed indeed at the restraints which prudence prescribed him in the relation of contemporary

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxii. 29.

Discourage-  
ment of con-  
temporary his-  
tory.

events, in which truth could seldom be told without impugning the conduct of men in power, court favourites or court parasites, if it did not hit the blots in the character of Cæsar himself. It was still more galling, perhaps, to leave the field open to the flatterers and intriguers who debased history into mere panegyric, and filled the ear of Rome with unblushing falsehood. The harsh repression exercised towards the utterers of the truth in this particular, had deterred the most honourable men from her ill-requited service, and checked the license of remark on the personages around him which the Roman magnate cherished as his birthright. To many this restraint on personal criticism was the sorest point in their servitude. But with this exception the mind of the educated classes still flowed freely enough in the well-worn channels of literature, and the stability of the government was no doubt, in a great degree, founded on the ease and freedom with which the men of letters moved in their chains, and their general acquiescence in the position assigned them.<sup>1</sup>

Alliance of  
philosophy at  
Rome with re-  
ligion and gov-  
ernment.

The class, never numerous at Rome, which interested itself in moral speculations, had enjoyed remarkable freedom from interference at the hands of constituted authority. The proud aristocracy of the senate was little troubled by the nervous alarms at heterodoxy, so common to half-instructed democracies, full of prejudices, and conscious of their want of skill and learning to defend them. Hence, except once or twice, at moments of great intellectual disturbance, the government of the Free State had suffered the philosophers to teach as they pleased, and put no restraints on the spirit of inquiry which was sapping the positive beliefs of the day. If it ever evinced any jealousy of the new teaching, it was against the Greek foreigner, not against the heretic, against the

<sup>1</sup> It is fair to remark, on the other hand, that the strictures of contemporary history were not checked at Rome, as among ourselves within recent times, by the code of honour, nor practically at least, as it would appear, by a law of libel.

enemy of Rome, not the enemy of the gods, that it was directed. The full establishment of the Roman power in the East was followed by complete acquiescence in the teaching, however liberal and daring, which flowed from that source to the West. From the last century of the republic all attempt at interference ceased. The young Roman noble was initiated, as a matter of course, in the contentions of the Academy and the Lyceum; he traversed the inevitable career from doubt to rationalism, and from rationalism to doubt again; while neither priests nor magistrates complained of the new sphere of ideas into which he was launched, sure, as they were, to extinguish in his mind the old belief of his countrymen. All the Grecian schools agreed at least in one thing, namely, to inculcate outward respect for established forms of religion as an instrument of government. It might be curious to trace the origin of this peculiar feature in their teaching; whether it was a prudent concession to the demands of the authorities, under which they taught; whether they were unconsciously swayed by the apprehension that in the uncertainty which confessedly hung over their own undetermined principles, the Voice of the People might be after all a faint echo of the Voice of God: but so it was that Stoic, Epicurean, Peripatetic and Eclectic, all consented to practise on public occasions the rites which they not less openly derided in their speaking and writing. The compromise was certainly effectual, at least to a late period.

Modern despotisms are charged with allowing the freest licence of religious discussion, not in the interest of truth, but as a necessary compensation for the silence they impose upon all discussion on politics.<sup>1</sup> It will be seen that if Roman imperialism is liable to the same charge, it was at least no new inven-

Attitude of opposition to government first assumed by the Stoics under the empire.

<sup>1</sup> This charge, so commonly made against certain Continental governments at the present day, and with peculiar force against the old monarchy of France (see De Tocqueville's instructive book, *l'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, liv. ii. ch. 11., liv. iii. ch. 2.), may be extended, I conceive, with equal truth to oligarchies generally.



tion of tyranny. The Sceptic and the Atheist had been allowed full scope under the government of the senate, and the Cæsars, in leaving religion still open to their attacks, only followed the state tradition bequeathed them from the republic. The philosophers, however, while they accepted freedom as their right, were not bound thereby to keep terms with the government which condescended to grant it. They had a higher mission, and a corresponding sense of duty. With the gross and immoral practices, indeed, allowed, encouraged, sometimes even prescribed, by the Pagan superstitions, philosophy did not concern herself. She did not stoop to inform or amend the ignorant rabble of the temple-worshippers: but the opposition between her and the government became flagrantly wicked and tyrannical, was more and more openly avowed. The wisdom of the Porch was not the antagonist of vulgar vices; but her precepts, addressed to the ruling classes of the empire, stood forth in bold and startling hostility to the principles of existing authority. The city of the Stoics was the city of God, not the city of Cæsar. The empire for which they sighed on earth was the empire of the best and wisest, of the oligarchs of reason, not the empire of the blind ignoble multitude impersonated in the tribune of its choice. Christian moralists have taunted Stoicism with the hopeless distance at which it stood from the sympathies of mankind in general. Such, they say, is the nature of man, that it requires the prospect of reward, here or hereafter, as an efficient stimulus to virtue. This argument is probably true, and as a general proposition no doubt the Stoics would have also admitted it. But, having themselves no assurance of any such retributive Providence, they aimed at raising the choicest spirits from the common level to a higher standard of excellence, and inculcated duty without reward as the end of existence, not as a religion for the many, but as a philosophy for the few. Shocked as their nobler instincts were at the vile degradation of the multitude, they conceived the Truth as something unappreciable by it. Could the Truth have been made intelligible to mankind in

general, it would, in their view, have ceased to be Truth at all. And this, after all, was very similar to the view of Christianity itself entertained by some of our primitive teachers. Tertullian in a striking passage asserted broadly that the Cæsars would long since have been converted to Christianity, if Christians could be themselves Cæsars, that is, if government could be Christian.<sup>1</sup> Christianity, he conceived, must always stand apart from the ordinary march of affairs; the true faith could only be the faith of a chosen congregation; mankind in general were equally incapable of moral renovation and of spiritual conversion.

Let the Stoics, then, be judged solely by what they attempted. Their aims were high, but not wide-reaching. They sought to make some men more than human, but there was no question with them of the few or the many. They boasted that their preternatural standard of holiness was not absolutely unattainable, and if they could point to a single Cato or a single Thræsea, as having attained to it, their problem was solved, their principle was established. Virtue had become impersonate. Man had become God. The end of creation was accomplished. Even from the attempt to accomplish this end, however imperfectly, other blessings might flow, indirectly and collaterally: though, indeed, by the true mystic of the Porch these were little heeded. The aspirations, however, of the Stoics in general were really less visionary and unpractical. They descended from the clouds to earth to impregnate with noble and fruitful principles such forms of government as were actually accessible to them. Captivated as they often were by the aspect of the law, as the exponent of the Divine Will, the representative of Divine Justice upon earth, they devoted themselves to moulding it to their notions, and informed it with wise and lofty maxims. Stoicism enlarged the minds of its worthy votaries by purer conceptions of Deity, and more liberal views of humanity, teaching

Principles on  
which Stoicism  
is to be judged.

<sup>1</sup> Tertull. *Apo'og.* 21.: "Sed et Cæsares credidissent super Christo, si aut Cæsares non essent sæculo necessarii, aut si *Christiani potuissent esse Cæsares.*"

the unity of God with man, and of men with one another, asserting the supremacy of the Will over the Passions, of Mind over Matter, of eternal Duty over temporal Expediency. It sublimed every aspiration after the Good, the Just, the Honourable, by pronouncing it the instinct of divinity within us. The immortality of the soul, the triumph of the Righteous, a fleeting Present and an illimitable Future, these indeed were doctrines which some Stoics held, some perhaps ventured to teach dogmatically: but they were not the true vital principles of the sect; they savoured too much of offering bribes to virtue, they were, in short, too popular, to seduce the sterner preachers of a morality which must have no regard either to punishment on the one hand, or reward on the other.<sup>1</sup>

Galling indeed to the selfish voluptuaries of the palace must have been the bold and even ostentatious preaching of these soul-stirring doctrines, which seemed to proclaim a higher freedom than that of the body, a nobler existence than that of the world and the flesh.<sup>2</sup> Whatever there was of ardour, of generosity and self-devotion, among the Roman youth at this era of national torpor, was absorbed in the strong current of Stoicism. The Epicurism of the earlier empire had been the plea of men who were ashamed of the renunciation they had made of their independence. But since independence had become a mere phantom of the past, the philosophy which

Stoicism attractive at this period to the noblest characters at Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, says M. Denis (*Idées Morales dans l'Antiquité*, ii. 253.), faithful to the old traditions of the Porch, speak but faintly and obscurely on the immortality of the soul. The only philosophers who formally admit it are Seneca, Plutarch, and Maximus Tyrius; the former as a matter of hope, the others as an incontestable dogma.

<sup>2</sup> The expression "the flesh" for human passions, which has been almost appropriated to Christian teaching, is found at this time in Seneca. In the *Consolatio ad Marciam*, c. 24., he says, as St. Paul might have said: "Animo cum carne grave certamen." Comp. Persius, *Sat.* ii. in fin.:

"Et bona Dis ex hac scelerata ducere pulpa."

It had been already used commonly by Philo, who took it perhaps from the Septuagint. *Sirac.* xxiii. 23.



excused men for deserting it was no longer specially attractive; while Stoicism, which could substitute a higher object in its place, assumed in its turn the ascendant. Under the Free State it had generally been admitted that the maxims of the Poreh, stiff and harsh as they were, ill accorded with the conduct of public affairs, and the government of mankind in general. The experience, perhaps the instinct, of the free-born Roman assured him that a man could not be an active and useful citizen, and at the same time the disciple of a speculative Puritanism. The pretensions of the jurist Sulpicius to unite the two characters had moved the derision of Cicero: the attempt of Cato had issued in more serious consequences; it had hastened the fall of the republic. But these men had few admirers or followers in their own day. It was under the empire, when man's free will had no longer scope for action, that the philosophy which exalted Fate above all human affairs found acceptance with thoughtful and melancholy idlers. Stoicism became a consolation for inactivity not a stimulus to action. Views of the highest wisdom which led men's speculations away from the deceitful shows of life, and fixed them upon ideal excellences, might be an object of suspicion to the government; they might be interpreted by timid and jealous rulers as discontent with existing circumstances, disaffection towards the empire, a disposition to change and innovation. Nevertheless, the charge against them, which Tacitus supposes to have been urged by Tigellinus, that they made men restless and ambitious meddlers with affairs, is strongly belied by all we read about the most genuine and consistent professors of Stoicism at this period at Rome.<sup>1</sup> Possibly it is not intended to express the opinion of the author himself: possibly it is directed against the false pretenders to the title, or the ardent patriots who failed to recognise the purely spiritual character of its precepts. Seneca seems,

The charge against it of contumaciousness and seditiousness not well grounded.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 57.: "Assumpta Stoicorum arrogantia, sectaque, quæ turbidos et negotiorum appetentes faciat."

at all events, to speak more accurately, when he says that they are in error who imagine that the true philosopher is contumacious, refractory, a despiser of magistrates and governments.<sup>1</sup> Even the notion, so commonly adopted, that the Stoics particularly devoted themselves to the science of law, and played a great part in constructing the fabric of Roman jurisprudence, is much mistaken or exaggerated.<sup>2</sup> The legal principles which can be traced to their moral maxims are but few; and, indeed, the reasoners who were bound to maintain the equality of all sins could hardly have interested themselves in the just apportionment of punishments to crimes. All enthusiasm, no doubt, is hateful to tyranny. The enthusiasm of the Stoics was to be feared, to be watched, to be controlled. Yet this sentiment, checked as it was by the force of circumstances, and the deadly apathy of society around it, passed in many noble spirits of the sect into a kind of quietism. They had no concern with the republic; they lived under the gods, not under Cæsar.<sup>3</sup> It became their aim and pride rather to bear all things than to dare any thing. They tried to persuade the emperor that he was a slave, but they made no attempt to deprive him of his sovereignty. Nero would smile, perhaps, at the declamations he heard on the splendid text of the poet: *Great Father of the Gods, punish Thou tyrants no other wise than thus: let them behold the Virtue they have abandoned, and pine away at the loss of her.*<sup>4</sup> On the

Political innocence of its professors.

<sup>1</sup> Senec. *Ep.* 73.: "Errare mihi videntur qui existimant philosophiæ fideliter deditos contumaces esse ac refractarios, et contemptores magistratum."

<sup>2</sup> This remark is opposed to the common opinion of the commentators on Roman law, which the few and trifling coincidences which Heineccius discovers between the Stoic and the legal principles are surely not sufficient to justify. See *Antiqu. Rom.* i. i. 3. That under the early empire many juriconsults were Stoics would naturally follow from the prevalence of the Stoic philosophy among the highest order of minds at that period.

<sup>3</sup> So Apollonius of Tyana, himself an Eclectic, could say in the true spirit of the Stoics: *ἐμοὶ πολιτείας μὲν οὐδεμιᾶς μέλει· ζῶ γὰρ ὑπὸ τοῖς θεοῖς.*—Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* v. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Persius, *Sat.* iii. 35:—

whole, then, the philosophers were little offensive to the government. They enjoyed accordingly an impunity which they might mistake for deference. It was known, perhaps, that they were discredited among the masses of the people by the worthless character of the many hypocrites who assumed their name; and the emperors observed with complacency the popular suspicion under which the best men laboured, confounded as they too often were with notorious pretenders.<sup>1</sup> To a late period in Nero's reign they remained, as we have seen, entirely unmolested: it was not till they were urged by patriotism or humanity to engage in the intrigues of political conspirators, that they became objects themselves of imperial hostility. Even then, the proscriptions fell on individuals only; it was never extended to the class: the schools were never closed, the teachers were never silenced, the principles were never condemned.<sup>2</sup> All this we shall witness at a later period; though Stoicism, we shall still remark, was

“Magne Pater Divum, sævos punire tyrannos . . . .

Haud alia ratione velis . . . .

Virtutem videant intabescantque relicta.”

<sup>1</sup> Quintil. *proem. Inst.* i. “Veterum quidem sapientiæ professorum multos et honesta præcepisse, et ut præceperunt etiam vixisse, facile concesserim: nos tris vero temporibus sub hoc nomine maxima in plerisque vitia latuerunt: non enim virtute et studiis ut haberentur philosophi laborabant, sed vultum et tristitiam, et dissentientem a cæteris habitum pessimis moribus prætendebant. Comp. Juvenal, ii. 3. :—

“Qui Curios simulant et Bacchanalia vivunt . . . .

Fronti nulla fides,” &c.

<sup>2</sup> Canus Julius, the Stoic, is reputed the first of the philosophers who suffered from the jealousy of the empire. The circumstances of his death, under Caius, are set forth with great pomp by Seneca (*Tranquill. Anim.* 14.); but the charges against him are not mentioned. Pætus suffered under Claudius, and many philosophers were sacrificed by Nero, but always for political offences. The notion that Nero banished the philosophers from Rome and Italy, though commonly asserted (see Imhof, *Domitianus*, p. 104.), is unquestionably erroneous. It rests merely on the assertion of the rhetorician Philostratus (*Vit. Apoll.* iv. 35.), but this Brucker (*Hist. Phil.* ii. 118.) very reasonably interprets of a prohibition of magic, to which Apollonius, according to his biographer, pretended. See Newman on Apollon. Tyanæus, in the *Encycl. Metropolitana*.



not officially smitten, till it perversely attacked an indulgent prince and a liberal monarchy. The pupil of Seneca, at least, is guiltless of the persecution of his master's philosophy. I repeat that we must appreciate to its full extent the freedom of thought conceded by the empire, to understand the patience of the Romans under the restraint it placed upon action.

But these considerations apply only to the higher classes of the state, to which the exercise of the intellect was a privilege dearly prized, earned by toil, guarded with jealousy, esteemed the badge of their pre-eminence. Let us turn now to the subjects which interested the vulgar herd of the city and the provinces, and examine how far the liberty allowed in these respects might console them for the losses they sustained, when they placed themselves under a master's control. Little as even the multitude believed in the dogmas of the national religion, they were still devotedly attached to their ancient rites and usages; they required their rulers to pay outward deference to the gods, as symbols, at least, of truth, if not truth itself, actual and positive. The revival of religion by Augustus was not mere statecraft: it was the expression of a real want of the age, and it had great and lasting results. If it gave no genuine impulse to belief in the mind of the Romans, it nevertheless undoubtedly confirmed them for ages in practices which had all the signs, and some perhaps of the effects, of actual belief. It reanimated the spirit of worship and respect for superior existences. The current of men's spiritual affections continued to set steadily in the direction of ritual observance. The restoration, adorning, and multiplication of temples went on from Cæsar to Cæsar. The established sacrifices were offered, the appointed auspices observed, year by year continually. There is no apparent indication of a decrease in the number of temple-worshippers; though the stream of devotion might fluctuate towards rival fanes, it rolled on with undiminished force and volume.<sup>1</sup> The priesthood remained as grave and honourable

The revival of religion under Augustus to a great extent a genuine movement.

<sup>1</sup> This assertion is opposed to the general opinion, and writers on the sub-

a function as ever; the temples continued to receive lavish gifts and endowments. Though the most illustrious of the oracles fell into disuse, and the silence of Apollo at Delphi was ascribed to the growing sinfulness of the times by the pious apprehensions of the multitude, to the jealous policy of kings by the juster observation of political reasoners, the science of divination flourished with unabated luxuriance, and new prophets sprang into repute to attract the inquirers who were repelled from the voiceless tripods of the old.<sup>1</sup> The priests contrived to retain the submission of the vulgar, ever willingly persuaded, to their pretended communications with

jeet have repeated one another, or appealed in succession to a common stock of texts in confirmation of a different view. I believe the texts in question are the following only: Propert. ii. 6. 35. :—

. . . . "Velavit aranea fanum  
Et mala desertos occupat herba Deos;"

and iii. 13. 47. :—

"At nunc desertis cessant sacraria lucis,  
Aurum omnes vieta, jam pietate colunt;"

both of which, besides their rhetorical character, refer to a period antecedent to the revival we are considering. Philostratus, in *Vit. Apoll.* i. 2., says that some temples were refilled by his philosopher after having suffered desertion; but this does not refer to Rome or Italy. The passage in Pliny, *Ep.* v. 97., and Lucian, *Timon*, 4., refer, such as they are, to another period. Such are the slender authorities, however, which seem to satisfy Neander, *Kirchengeschichte*, i. 80. : Tzschirner, *Fall des Heidenthums*, 113.; and Schmidt, a sedulous collector of texts, *Denk und Glaubensfreiheit*, 168.

<sup>1</sup> On the silence of the Delphic oracle, Juvenal, vi. 555. :—

. . . . "Delphis oraacula cessant."

Lucan gives one reason which might be assigned for it: v. 113. :—

"Postquam reges timuere futura  
Et Superos vetuere loqui:"

And again, 140. :—

"Seu Pæan, solitus templis arcere nocentes,  
Ora quibus solvat nostro non invenit ævo."

Comp. Plutarch, *de Defectu Oraculorum*, 5. foll. Lucian, indeed, at a somewhat later period, seems to refer to Delphi as still prophetic: ἡ ψευδεὶς εἰσὶν οἱ νῦν ἐκπίπτοντες ἐκεῖ χρησμοί.—*Alexander*, 42. But possibly the work is not genuine.

heaven, by the fame of wonders worked by images or in temples, and still more by the supposed fulfilment of their auguries. It was the interest of the government to humour this submission under discreet regulations, and of its more enlightened subjects to humour the government itself by affecting to join in it, so that the populace became the victim of a double conspiracy. The policy of the state is freely disclosed to us in the counsels ascribed by Dion to Mæcenas, which no doubt represent in substance the views of the emperors and their advisers even at this period. *Be careful, he said, yourself to worship the gods always and everywhere, according to the customs of Rome, and compel others to do likewise; but detest and punish the promoters of strange religions, not for the sake of the gods only, but because such innovaters beguile men into foreign sentiments and customs, and hence arise plots, combinations, and clubs, which are especially dangerous to monarchy.*<sup>1</sup> To maintain the exclusive practice of the genuine Roman religion, if indeed it could be accurately defined, had been long deemed impossible under the republic. A compromise had been effected by granting toleration, sometimes by special decree, as in the case of the Jews, to certain foreign cults established in their own countries, which it seemed expedient to tolerate, or which had taken too deep root in Rome to be really extirpated. Any other practices or belief, however, that made their way into the city from abroad, must do so at their peril. They were liable at any moment to legal animadversion, and it required the enactment of no new, the rescinding of no old law, to expose them to proscription, whenever the jealousy of the monarchy, more sensitive than the Free State, was awakened against them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lii. 36. Comp. Cic. *de leg.* ii. 8.: "Separatim nemo habessit deos, neve novos, sive advenas, nisi publice adsecitos, privatim colunto."

<sup>2</sup> Such was the distinction between the religiones licitæ and illicitæ. Tertullian, *Apol.* 4. 21.; Minucius Felix, *Octav.* 8. Judaism was licensed, though occasionally the license was withdrawn, and its professors expelled from Rome by a special decree. Christianity, as we shall see, was unlicensed. It had no



The policy of Augustus, accordingly, in the matter of religion, was a more systematic enforcement of the principles of the republic, namely, to endow the state religion with emoluments and honours, to tolerate certain accredited foreign cults, but to forbid and repress all strange and novel usages. It was the attempt, in short, to cast the religious sentiments of the age in a mould, once for all, from which there should be no escape for the future.<sup>1</sup> The moment might appear well chosen for such an attempt, when in the prevailing fusion of nations and opinions, and the widespread disappointment of moral and religious speculations, men seemed content to rest from all further experiment in a decently-veiled atheism or pantheism. Such an attempt seems to have succeeded for once in the history of China; but it was singularly ill-timed, as became speedily apparent, in the age and clime which witnessed the origin of Christianity. And, indeed, not yet to advert to the phenomenon of the Christian revelation, the spiritual activity of the human mind throughout the East, at this moment, was such as to defy the control of the emperor's or the prætor's edicts. The ideas of Druidism, the religion of the West, were almost powerless. In Rome they collapsed instantaneously; in the cities of Gaul they yielded without a struggle to Roman forms and nomenclature: it was only in the deep woods and silent plains that they retained a spark of vitality. Not so the Syrian elemental-worship; not so the moral convictions of Judaism and Tsabaism. The crowds which flocked to Rome from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean brought with them practices and prejudices hardly worthy, perhaps, to be called legal standing in Rome, and, not being a national religion, I presume it had no legal standing anywhere. I merely allude to this subject here to mark the distinction.

Position of the Roman religion in relation to the superstitions of Gaul and Syria respectively.

<sup>1</sup> It may be worth while to remind the reader of the three constituent elements of the Roman religion: 1. the service of the old Sabine or Italian divinities; 2. the aruspical discipline, &c., derived principally from Etruria; 3. the cult of certain foreign deities introduced generally by the advice of special oracles (publice ascitos), such as those of Ceres, Æsculapius, and Cybele.

beliefs, which disdained amalgamation with Italian paganism, and however distorted they might be from their original types, acknowledged no constraining influence from the opinions and usages around them. The stronger sentiment, as usual, attracted and controlled the weaker. Jupiter had conquered Hesus and Taranis, but he was a child in the hands of Mithras and Melcarth. The broader forms of the Syrian religion, as established in its native countries, were tolerated in Rome; and from toleration they advanced without pause or hesitation on a career of active proselytism. The symbolic rites of Cybele and Astarte invaded the streets and the forum, and carried off crowds of worshippers from the shrines of Juno and Diana. But they too were tolerant in their turn, and demanded no exclusive devotion from their converts: the idleness and wealth of Rome could afford time and means for the celebration of many new ceremonies in addition to the simple *performance of divine service* which its own religion prescribed.<sup>1</sup> They offered, and herein was the secret of their success, a mental excitement without the fatigue and agitation of argument. In philosophy no step could be taken without some use of the reasoning powers; every man held his opinions in defiance of all opponents; even the schools of oratory as well as of philosophy had their sects, their masters, their maxims, and their disputations. The noble Roman, indeed, for the most part entertained a professional sophist to think and argue for him: nevertheless it was not till he abandoned his philosophy for his religion that he was completely relieved from intellectual toil and discipline; and doubtless the outward observance of ritual forms was in a great degree the refuge to which he fled from the painful questions of morals and metaphysics. The curious and sometimes awful

<sup>1</sup> "Rem divinam facere," to perform holy rites, consisted in the occasional sacrifice, the daily burning of incense and casting of salt and flour into the flame, the one in the temples, the other on the domestic hearth or altar. The more public solemnities, such as processions, hymns, and musical services, together with the fasts and vigils appropriated to foreign divinities, were generally less familiar to the Roman ritual.

rites of initiation, the tricks of the magicians, the pretended virtues of charms and amulets, the riddles of emblematical idolatry, enshrined in the form of brutes or monsters half-brute half-human, with which the superstitions of the East abounded, amused the languid interests of the voluptuary who, as has been well remarked, had neither the energy for a moral belief, nor the boldness requisite for a logical scepticism.<sup>1</sup>

While the men's minds were still too hardy to submit to these voluptuous excitements, the women had thrown themselves into them with all the passionate self-abandonment of their weaker natures. Uninstructed, ill-treated, half-employed, yet vain of the outward show of deference the laws and habits of the age continued to accord them, the Roman matrons followed these frivolous novelties with a fervour which scandalized their supercilious lords. They rushed from the sordid constraint of their lives at home to the licentious freedom of the veiled orgy and masquerading procession. In them they sought too for spiritual consolation, and they found, at least, an occupation and an interest.<sup>2</sup> And beyond this their imaginations were kindled with ideas of communion with the Deity, and exaltation above earthly things, which made them the dupes of charlatans, the prey of ribald intriguers. The story of the unscrupulous gallant who gained possession of his mistress by personating the god Anubis with the connivance and aid of the priests, is one instance recorded, out of many, no doubt, which have passed into oblivion, of the crimes and injuries which vexed the souls of the Roman hus-

The Roman women fascinated by the orgies and ceremonies of the Eastern cults,

<sup>1</sup> Such is nearly the expression of De Broglie in speaking on this subject, in his *l'Eglise et l'Empire*, i. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Strabo may have pointed his general remark on the superior devotion of the female sex from personal observation: ἅπαντες γὰρ τῆς δεισιδαιμονίας ἀρχηγοὺς οἴονται τὰς γυναῖκας· αὐταὶ δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας προκαλοῦνται πρὸς τὰς ἐπὶ πλέον θεραπείας τῶν θεῶν, καὶ ἑορτὰς, καὶ ποτνιασμούς· σπάνιον δ' εἴ τις ἀνὴρ καθ' αὐτὸν ζῶν εὐρίσκεται τοιοῦτος.—vii. 3. p. 297. See Lipsius on Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 32.



bands.<sup>1</sup> Augustus had already banished the Egyptian rites from Rome; but they triumphed over his decrees. Tiberius repeated the same experiment on the submission of their devotees; he caused the temples of Isis to be razed, and even, it is said, executed her priests.<sup>2</sup> But the men were now following in the train of the women. The effeminaey of the times involved both sexes in the same vortex of superstition; the Nile-Gods continued to fascinate their votaries with charms which could not be dissolved; the idol of the blear-eyed Egyptian still brandished the terrors of her cymbal, and threatened with blindness the perjurer of the forum.<sup>3</sup> The rites of the Syrian Goddess, if less dangerous than the Isiac to morals and less insulting to the majesty of the Roman household, were perhaps even more degrading. They were more attractive, it would seem, to the lower classes than to the patrician rulers of the state, and thereby escaped the same animadversion. The priests of Astarte roamed from village to village, carrying their sacred image on an ass's back, and at every halt attracted the gaping rustics with the strains of their flutes, danced in a circle round the goddess with their hair dripping

which at length  
prevail over the  
men also.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Antiq.* xviii. 3. A Roman knight, Decius Mundus, had tried in vain to seduce Paulina by presents and flatteries. One of his female slaves promised to gain him the object of his passion, and bribed the priests of Isis, whom Paulina worshipped. The priests assure the devotee that Anubis had promised to appear to her. She hastens delighted to the temple; the doors are closed, the lights extinguished, the god reveals himself and demands favours which she dares not deny. Mundus boasts that he has enjoyed her under the semblance of the god. She discloses the injury to her husband, who complains to the emperor Tiberius. Mundus is banished, the priests crucified, the temple overthrown.

<sup>2</sup> The cults of Egypt, with their allegorical monsters and hideous symbols, were peculiarly hateful to the Romans, who regarded such superstitions as abnormal. But political jealousy contributed to this exceptional treatment, for they do not seem to have been always excluded from the *religiones licitæ*, or licensed observances.

<sup>3</sup> Juvenal, xiii. 93. :—

“Decernat quodeunque volet de corpore nostro  
Isis, et irato feriat mea lumina sistro.”

with unguents, cut themselves with knives and swords, and dashed their own blood around them, handing finally a cap from rank to rank for the pence, figs, or crusts of the admiring spectators.<sup>1</sup> The obscene mutilation of the priests of Cybele excited still more astonishment, mingled, no doubt, with superstitious terror; but though, as the Mother of the Gods, she was honoured by the Roman matrons with the solemn feast of the Megalesia, the frantic asceticism of her Eastern devotees found probably no imitators among the manlier sons of Italy.

The apologists for polytheism had not yet proclaimed their theory that all the various gods of various nations were only diverse representations of the same Essential Unity. They had gone no further than to countenance the politic interpretations of Cæsar and Augustus, who announced to their Gaulish subjects that Belenus and Teutates were merely other names for Apollo and Mercury. Nevertheless, amidst the distraction of the religious sentiment between its thousands of devotional objects, the time had come for some faint and timid appreciation of the idea of the Divine Unity presented by the nobler theology of the Jews. The Jewish religion had come first under the close observation of the Romans after the conquest of Palestine by Pompeius. Some thousands of the inhabitants had been carried off into slavery, and of these a large proportion, reserved perhaps to grace the conqueror's triumph, had been sold in the Roman markets. Several princes of the nation had been retained as hostages; and these personages, who were treated with great show of courtesy, were allowed, no doubt, the attendance of clients of their own race. The way to the capital of the world was opened, and the Jews continued to flock thither of their own accord: they were impelled by their thirst of

The time arrived for appreciating the idea of the Divine Unity, the essential dogma of Judaism.

<sup>1</sup> Lucian, *Lucius*, 32. Apuleius, *Metamorph.* viii. in fin., describes these proceedings with his usual animation. His scene is laid beyond the Adriatic, yet there seems no reason to doubt that these ribaldries were imported into Italy.

lucre and their restless industry: yet they possessed, as far as we know, no special arts or aptitude, like the Greeks or Egyptians, for making themselves necessary or acceptable visitors at the doors of the native Italians. Much did the Romans marvel at the swarms of these uncouth adventurers, with their deeply-marked physiognomy, their strong national feelings, their far-reaching reminiscences of past glory, their proud anticipation of a more splendid future, their exclusive usages, their vacant fanes, their incommunicable Deity. They thronged together in particular quarters of the city, which they almost made their own:<sup>1</sup> their numbers soon amounted to many thousands, and the turbulence which was early remarked as characteristic of them, caused the senate to regard them with jealousy, its orators to denounce them as

The Jews in  
Rome patron-  
ized by the first  
Cæsars.

dangerous subjects. But they were fortunate in finding patrons, first in Cæsar and afterwards in Augustus, who secured them the free exercise of their religion, countenanced their assemblies, made gifts to their temple, and even admitted them along with the citizens of the republic to a share in the largesses of corn.<sup>2</sup> If the distribution took place on their Sabbath, the Jews were allowed to apply for their share on the day following. The mysteriousness of their belief, or rather, perhaps, the earnestness of its devotees, exercised an extraordinary influence on the Roman mind. Amidst many public expressions of hatred and disgust, knights and senators still turned towards it with curiosity, interest, and awe. In Palestine rude centurions lowered their ensigns before its symbols, or built synagogues for its worshippers. In Rome the name of its first expounder

<sup>1</sup> Philo, *Leg. ad Cai.* p. 1014.: Τὴν πέραν τοῦ Τιβέρεως ποταμοῦ μέγαν τῆς Ῥώμης ἀποτομὴν . . . κατεχομένην καὶ οἰκούμενην πρὸς Ἰουδαίων. Most of them, it is added, were captives who had been enfranchised, and had become Roman citizens.

<sup>2</sup> Philo, *Leg. ad Cai.* p. 1015. This is an important fact for the consideration of those who estimate the number of the citizens from the number of these recipients of corn. According to Josephus,—but allowance must be made for his spirit of exaggeration,—no less than 8000 Jews resident in Rome joined on one occasion in a petition to Augustus. Joseph. *Antiq.* xvii. 11. 1.



was held in honour; its sacred books were not unknown, the glowing imagery of their poetry was studied and reproduced. Men and women, the latter doubtless the most numerous, crowded its place of meeting, observed its holy days, and respected its antique traditions. Many, it would seem, were admitted to some partial communion with the Jewish worshippers: though we do not hear of their submitting to the initiatory rites, or to the peculiar abstinences of national Judaism. The foreigner was still reserved in imparting to these converts the secrets of his faith; and the best informed of the Romans continued, to a late period, possessed with the notion that he either had no God at all, or adored him under a vile and bestial symbol, or possibly did not really know what he believed or wherefore.<sup>1</sup>

Judaism becomes fashionable among the citizens,

This dallying with Judaism was a fashionable weakness: it furnished interest or excitement to the dissipated idlers to whom Ovid addressed his meretricious poetry.<sup>2</sup> To such persons it was probably first recommended through the medium of the slaves from Palestine who swarmed in patrician households. The emperor's palace itself seems to have been a nursery of Jewish usages and opinions. The Columbaria of Claudius, recently discovered, reveal a number of Hebrew names among the imperial freedmen; and, what is still more remarkable, many are the same names, albeit Greek and not Hebrew, which occur in the salutations of St. Paul to his fellow-countrymen in the capital.<sup>3</sup> Assuredly there were in *Cæsar's household*

and is introduced among the freedmen of the palace.

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Juvenal, xiv. 97: "Nil præter nubes et cœli numen adorant." Lucan, *Phars.* ii. 592.: "Et dedita sacris Incerti Judæa Dei." Seneca, quoted by S. Augustin, *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 11.: "Major pars populi facit quod cur faciat ignorat." For the symbol, the ass's head, see Tac. *Hist.* v. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ovid, *Art Amand.* i. 416.; *Rem. Amor.* 220.; Tibull. i. 3. 18.

<sup>3</sup> I refer to Mr. Lightfoot's account of the inscriptions in certain Columbaria recently discovered at Rome, *Journal of Class. Philol.* No. X. p. 57. from Henzen's supplement to Orelli's Collection. These were receptacles for the ashes of slaves and freedmen of the imperial family. Some of the names, as Hermas and Nereis, are connected with the Claudian gens; others, as Tryphæna and Tryphera, with the Valerian, that of Messalina; others, as Crescens, Phile-

both slaves and freedmen of every race and nation subject to Rome: but that the connexion between it and Judea should be more than usually close, might be expected from the favour in which the Jews were held by the first emperors, and from the intimacy of the imperial family with so many Jewish princes detained within the precincts of the palace. Judea, under the sway of the procurators, was governed directly from the emperor's own chamber; in one instance a freedman of the emperor administered its affairs, as his master's private property.<sup>1</sup> When we read in the Jewish historian that Poppæa, the murderess and adulteress, was a *devout woman*, we must suppose that she was regarded as a patroness by the Jewish clients of Nero's household; in moments of threatened persecution she may have befriended them, nor is it improbable that she admired their usages, humoured their prejudices, and partook of the fashionable inclination to join in their ceremonies.<sup>2</sup>

The favour in which the Jews were held by the emperor was indeed precarious. Beyond the walls of the palace, and of other noble mansions, they were, as we have said, generally disliked; the apprehension which their unquiet attitude at home continued more and more to inspire, penetrated to the centre of the Roman power, and even at Rome every outbreak of sullen fierceness among them was regarded as a symptom of national disaffection. They were accused not of turbulence only, but of corrupting the minds of women; and when, under Tiberius, an effort, as we have seen, was made by the government to check the growing relaxation of female man-

Turbulence of the Jews at Rome. The government evinces jealousy of them.

tus, Hymenæus, are mentioned as Cæsar's freedmen; others again, viz. Philologus and Ampliatus (Amplias), occur independently. Among them are some names apparently Jewish, as Baricha, Zabda, Achiba, Giddo, Sabbatis, all Valerii. One at least, Sentia Renata, seems to bespeak a Christian baptism. *Comp. Romans*, c. xvi.

<sup>1</sup> Felix, the favourite of Claudius and Nero, was procurator of Judea, and married to Drusilla, the daughter of Agrippa. *Tac. Hist.* v. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. *Antiq.* xviii. 7. 11. The dancer Apaturius, Poppæa's favourite, was a Jew.

ners, the Jews were marked out for proscription together with the Egyptians. The priests of Isis had been convicted of flagrant immorality, and there was a presumed connexion, of origin if not of character, between her rites and those of the Jewish divinity.<sup>1</sup> Besides the disaffection and the licentiousness imputed to them, they disturbed the peace of the city; for the Jews and Egyptians renewed in Rome the perpetual quarrel of their nations in Alexandria, till they provoked the police of the streets to crush them both together. The rites of both people were interdicted, and four thousand of the free descendants of Jewish slaves and captives were transported at once to Sardinia, while all the Jews at Rome of free origin were required to quit the shores of Italy, or abjure their *profane superstition*.<sup>2</sup> It would seem, however, that the latter part, at least, of this severe edict was not strictly executed. The Jews bowed to the storm, conformed perhaps for a time, but soon returned to their old quarters and renewed their old practices. Those who were attached to the magnates of the city found, no doubt, powerful protectors. They celebrated the birthday of their deceased king, and adored him as a god with pomp and fervour, to avert perhaps the jealousy of the government, to which the worship of Jehovah seemed a bond of more dangerous sympathy.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The ancient emigration of the Jews from Egypt was known, though under strange disfigurements, to the Romans (Tac. *Hist.* v. 3.); the influence of the Jewish race in Alexandria was also notorious; and the Jews in Rome spoke probably the same dialect of Greek as their brethren in Egypt. We may presume, moreover, that they had imbibed from the Alexandrians, or imparted to them, many religious as well as social usages. The linen robes and fillets common to the priesthoods both of Jerusalem and Alexandria seemed to connect them with one another, and were a conspicuous point of difference between them and the priesthoods of Greece and Rome. Thus Lucan, with a distinctive epithet, "*Linigerum placidis compellat Achorea dictis*," x. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* ii. 85.; Suet. *Tib.* 36.; Joseph. *Antiq.* xviii. 3. 5. See above, chapter xlv.

<sup>3</sup> This is the interpretation which Salvador, I think justly, puts upon the lines of Persius, *Sat.* v. 180.:—

"At cum  
Herodis venere dies, unctaque fenestra



Thus at Rome, as well as in their own country, the Jewish people were divided into two classes or factions, of which the one retained the zeal and cherished the aspirations of its national heroes, the other, more courtly and discreet, yielded to the moral influence of the conquerors, and was content to exchange the subjection of its native land for its own personal advantage. While the slaves of the Palatine acquiesced with a complacent smile in their gilded servitude, the artificers and chapmen of the Transtiberine, and the pedlars of the Egerian valley, were agitated year by year with rumours of new Messiahs appearing in the streets of Jerusalem or on the slopes of the wilderness, and drawing after them excited multitudes, till their career was rudely intercepted by the Roman sword. The direct establishment of the Roman power in Palestine by Claudius, following so soon upon the brutal attack on the Jewish faith by Caius, seems to have driven this frantic populace of Judea to a succession of desperate outbreaks. Among the Jewish sojourners in foreign cities, connected as they were by constant intercourse with their native land, the same restless feeling was speedily manifested. It is thus that we can best explain the hasty notice of Suetonius, when he states that Claudius once more expelled the Jews from Rome, on account of their repeated riots at the instigation of a certain Chrestus.<sup>1</sup> This name, as is well known, was a form of the title Christus, the anointed Messiah, familiar to the Romans and derived from the Hellenistic Jews themselves, and was the watchword, no doubt, of the disturbers of peace in the city, who looked, at every fresh arrival of exciting news from home, for a divine manifesta-

The Jews at Rome as in their own country, divided into two factions.

Dispositæ pinguem nebulam vomuere lucernæ . . .  
 Labra moves tacitus, recutitaque Sabbata palles."

Herod Agrippa was dead some years before these lines were written: the homage or worship was paid to his memory.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Claud.* 25.: "Judæos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit." Tertullian (*Apol.* 3.) and Lactantius (*Inst.* i. 4. 7., iv. 7. 5.) explain this word as a metonym for Christ, signifying just or good.

tion in favour of the kingdom of Jehovah.<sup>1</sup> The scarcity which befell the city as well as the provinces at this period might furnish a further motive for an act of prudential severity. It was manifestly expedient to remove from the midst of the needy populace of the forum the most fierce and turbulent of their fellow-subjects. With the return of better times the Jews returned also; but meanwhile the proscription would again have been partial only; the Herodians, under the shelter of noble houses, would shrink from the general persecution, and repudiate, no doubt, with earnest protestations, the crimes and follies of the zealots.

Not that the luxurious dependants of the Roman nobles were themselves unmoved amidst the universal ferment of Jewish opinion. They were vain of their own position, and of the influence they had attained over their masters; they were proud of the number of fellow-slaves or freedmen, for the most part refined and intelligent Greeks, who sate at their feet to hear their ancient lore, and drank in with warmed imaginations the wonders of the Law, and the splendid promises of the Prophets. God, they believed, still spake by their mouths; exiles and outcasts as they were, they were still the depositaries of His oracles; in the power of their own eloquence they felt the yet unexhausted power of a living faith in Jehovah. They were convinced that there was still a future before them, a future of glory and spiritual empire; though they sought in vain to penetrate the designs of Providence, and scan the process through which it was to be developed. They too had heard of a Christ here and a Christ there; but they had no hope of a temporal deliverance, and the destruction of

Spiritual pride  
of the Jewish  
freedmen at  
Rome.

<sup>1</sup> We know the time and place where the believers in Jesus were first called Christians (*Acts*, xi. 26. *χρηματίζουσι*, "received the title, already popularly known, of Christians"); but this does not show that the followers of false Christs had not received the name before, or that the name was not commonly given to both by the heathens without discrimination. For the false Christs, see the commentators on S. Matth. xxiv. 24. *ψευδοχρίστοι*, and Joseph. *Antiq.* xviii. 1. 1. on Judas the Gaulonite, and xx. 5. 1. on Theudas. Comp. for the Jewish view of the subject, Salvador, *Domin. Rom. en Judée*, i. 435.

each pretended Messiah was a relief to them rather than a disappointment. It was to minds thus prepared that the message of Jesus, the true Christ, the spiritual king of the Jews, was announced. Among the many deliverers who had risen and fallen, one alone, it was declared, had risen again : crucified, dead and buried, He had been raised from the grave by the hand of the Almighty.

On the first succeeding Pentecost after this awful fact was reported to have occurred, the doctrines and pretensions of the disciples of this risen Jesus had been propounded to a concourse of Jews and proselytes, assembled at Jerusalem from all quarters of the world. Sojourners at Rome had returned there full of the solemn tidings, and from that time the peculiar character of the new revelation, as the announcement of a spiritual, not a temporal deliverance, had been circulated from mouth to mouth among the Jews of the capital. By some among them such a view, as we have seen, might be entertained with favour, though by others it would be abhorred as treason to the national cause. At first, however, there would be no question, in any quarter, of the abandonment of ancient rites and usages. If a few more ardent or more tender spirits were at once captivated by the first shadowing forth of true Christian liberty, they would not dream as yet of seceding from the rest on matters of religious discipline. They would join with their brethren in urging upon their foreign proselytes that entire submission to the Hebrew law which was demanded, not often successfully, by the strictest adherents of the old belief. Again, year by year, visitors from this Jewish society would arrive at Jerusalem, and from them the Christian Church, now beginning to take a specific form in the place of its origin, would learn that a small knot of inquirers in the distant capital had accepted their announcement of the Messiahship of Jesus, and were ripe for further instruction in the mysteries of his faith. At last, in the fulness of time, the greatest of their teachers, Paul, the eloquent and the learned, addressed this little flock in a letter of

Reception of  
Christianity  
among this  
class of Jews  
and their prose-  
lytes.



spiritual admonition, which laid, in fact, the real foundation of Christianity in Rome. Now, supposing the people to whom this missive was directed to be, as I have here represented them, Jews and Greeks, retainers of aristocratic households, clients, for instance, of the great Narcissus and even of the emperor himself, to none could the warning with which it commences, of the fearful depths of vice to which heathenism had fallen, have been more peculiarly appropriate. On none could the general scope of its argument, that the Gospel was given to the Jews first, the teachers, and next to the Greeks, the proselytes, of the Roman synagogue, tell with greater effect. That circumcision was not essential, that the works of the law were ineffectual, that faith and grace are the foundations of a true Christian calling,—such would be the topics uppermost in the mind of a preacher to thoughtful and perplexed believers, anxious to conform to the old ways in all things, but unable to enforce conformity upon their foreign adherents. And lastly, the exhortation to remain subject to the higher powers would speak with emphasis to that class among the Jews who had hitherto kept aloof from the intrigues of their impatient countrymen, and proclaimed themselves obedient in everything, first to their own patrons and masters, and next to the political authorities under which they lived.<sup>1</sup> The Epistle to the Romans is, I conceive, especially addressed to the godly few of that patrician following, half Jew, half Grecian, who were feeling their way still timidly and doubtfully to belief in Jesus of Nazareth, the son of God, the true Messiah, the founder of the spiritual kingdom of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

Special applicability to them of St. Paul's teaching in the Epistle to the Romans.

<sup>1</sup> *Romans*, i. 8. foll., i. 16., iii. 25. foll., xiii. 1. foll. "They that are of the household of Narcissus" (xvi. 11.) are mentioned along with the others of whom so many appear to have been "of Cæsar's household." It is reasonable to infer that this Narcissus is the favourite of Claudius.

<sup>2</sup> On this supposition the remarkable compliment, if I may so call it, to this congregation, that *their faith was spoken of throughout the world* (*Rom.* i. 8.), receives an apt explanation. The disposition of these conspicuous freedmen towards Christianity would be reported to the family of the procurator in Judea,

This epistle, written in the East in the year 811 (A. D. 58), was followed, after an interval, perhaps, of three years, by the arrival of the apostle himself at Rome. He came in bonds. He had been seized and nearly killed by his countrymen at Jerusalem, for preaching the true Messiah. He had been accused by them to the Romans as a mover of sedition. But he had proclaimed himself a Roman citizen, had appealed to Cæsar, and, though brought as a prisoner to the imperial tribunal, he came under the protection of the government.<sup>1</sup> At Rome, he avowed, no doubt, his real character as a teacher of a harmless doctrine, already known, and not unfavourably, in the highest quarters; and though long detained untried, through the indolence, probably, of the emperor, he suffered no other inconvenience. He was guarded by the prætorians within the precincts of the palace, lodged in a hired cabin attached, it may be supposed, to its outer courts, such as those commonly occupied by the retainers of a noble patron; free access to him was allowed to his compatriots and co-religionists, and for two years he was employed in preaching and extending the faith even among the members of Cæsar's household.<sup>2</sup> Of the perfect security with which the Gospel of the

Arrival of St.  
Paul in Rome.

A. D. 61.  
A. U. 814.

and thence would doubtless be published abroad as an important fact among the Jews and Christians everywhere.

<sup>1</sup> The exact dates of these events are not important to this history, and I do not mean to express a decided opinion about them. I have followed the opinions which seemed to me on the whole the best supported.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase in *Phil.* i. 13., ἐν ὄλῳ τοῦ πραιτωρίου, as is well known, has been diversely interpreted, of the emperor's palace, and of the camp of the prætorians. I incline to the former interpretation. St. Paul, we must remember, speaks as a foreigner. In the provinces the emperor was known, not as Princeps, but as Imperator. In Judea, governed more immediately by him through the imperial procurators, he would be more exclusively regarded as a military chief. The soldier, to whom the apostle was attached with a chain, would speak of him as his general. When Paul asked the centurion in charge of him, "Where shall I be confined in Rome?" the answer would be, "In the prætorium," or the quarters of the general. When led, as perhaps he was, before the emperor's tribunal, if he asked the attending guards, "Where am I?" again they would reply, "In the prætorium." The emperor was protected in his

true Christ was professed at this time at Rome there can be no question. To account for it some have supposed an intimacy between Paul and the prefect Burrhus, or the minister Seneca, and the writings of the apostle and the philosopher present certainly some striking points of apparent sympathy. At a later period it was gravely asserted among the new sect, that Tiberius, on the official statements of Pontius Pilate, had acknowledged the divinity of the culprit whom the procurator had crucified, and had demanded divine honours from the senate for the Founder of Christianity. These the senate, it was said, declined to sanction: the emperor, however, insisted that the Christians should be allowed at least a full toleration.<sup>1</sup> The story itself, as told by Tertullian, is probably groundless throughout; but it shows at least, and such is the purpose for which Tertullian cites it, that the early indulgence of the government to Christianity was an admitted fact which challenged explanation. Whatever may be the value of these traditions, the opposition in which the true

palace by a body-guard, lodged in its courts and standing sentry at its gates: and accordingly they received the name of "prætorians." After the establishment of a camp for his body-guard outside the city, a cohort was still kept always in attendance on the emperor's person, and in his principal residence, and this accordingly in military language continued, I conceive, to bear the title familiar to the soldiers. The palace, like other patrician mansions, was surrounded by numerous cabins, tenanted by the retainers of the great man himself, and in one of these, as "a hired house," the apostle was permitted to dwell, from the favour, perhaps in which his nation was held, instead of being cast into the vaults beneath the palace floors.

<sup>1</sup> Tertull. *Apol.* 5.: "Tiberius . . . . annunciatum sibi ex Syria Palæstina quod illic veritatem illius divinitatis revelaverat, detulit ad Senatum cum prærogativa suffragii sui. Senatus, quia non ipse probaverat, respuit. Cæsar in sententia mansit, comminatus periculum accusatoribus Christianorum." This strange story has been generally rejected as incredible by the best critics and historians. It may be remarked, however, that the official minute of our Lord's trial and sentence was no doubt transmitted by the procurator to the emperor, and was deposited in the archives at Rome. It was hence perhaps that Tacitus was able to speak so pointedly of the execution of Christ by Pontius Pilate: "Auctor nominis ejus Christus, Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pileum supplicio affectus erat."—*Ann.* xv. 44.



believers stood to the assertors of false and temporal Messiahs would be alone a sufficient motive for the favour they manifestly received.

Nevertheless, there is no ground for supposing that, under the shelter of this indulgence, the young disciples shunned

Story of Pom-  
ponia Græcina  
in illustration  
of the conduct  
of the Roman  
converts.

the genuine practice of their profession, or walked unworthily of their spiritual hopes. The faint traces left us by history may suggest a pleasing picture to the imagination of the life and conversation of the first Christians at Rome, that little band of earnest and spiritual converts, first exploring by the light of conscience the rudiments of the new doctrine, then receiving clearer instruction from the letters, and lastly from the mouth of the inspired apostle, strengthened by his presence, inflamed by his zeal, reasoning ardently with the more timid of their brethren, gradually overcoming the scruples of some, bearing with the prejudices of others, suffering patiently the scorn of the proud and worldly with whom they mingled, and presenting to their curious visitors from surrounding Paganism the first and purest example of zeal beautified by charity. Some minds there were at Rome which shrank with a rebound from the grosser forms of corruption thrust everywhere upon them; some which were softened to feelings of humanity by the general ease and tranquillity of the times; some, again, which warmed with spiritual emotions under the fervent teaching of virtuous philosophers: even in that sink of vice, under the flaunting banners of lust and cruelty, there was a preparation at work for the reception of Gospel truth, and the plain preaching of St. Paul was more attractive perhaps to many than the strange rites and mysteries of the Jewish synagogue. But the apostle preached to his disciples *in bonds*, and of the multitudes who came to hear him, *no man forbidding him*, the true children of Rome were themselves still under constraint of pride and prejudice, and dependent on the idols of society around them, from which few, perhaps, could wholly escape. Jews and Greeks might submit to the yoke of a crucified Redeemer, but con-

version among the native Italians was as yet rare and imperfect.<sup>1</sup> To renounce a world with which it might seem impossible to mingle without defilement, rather than seek by active labours to purify it, would be the refuge of the grave and gloomy spirits which really broke through the restraints of law and custom to join themselves to a divine Saviour. The story of Pomponia Græcina, supposed by many to have been one of these Roman believers, may be taken at least in illustration of the form which belief might be expected to assume among a reserved and sensitive people, disdaining the spirit of proselytism, and ashamed to the last of rejecting their domestic and national ideas. This noble matron, the wife of Aulus Plautius, the conqueror of Britain, was, it seems, denounced to the emperor *as guilty of a foreign superstition*; a charge implying not merely participation in the rites of a licensed religion, but abandonment of the national worship, such as Christianity perhaps alone then demanded of its votaries.<sup>2</sup> Nero, from respect for a brave and loyal officer, or

<sup>1</sup> A great proportion of the converts greeted by St. Paul in the last chapter to the Romans bear Greek names. They may have been Jews or other foreigners, but assuredly not Romans by birth. The same was probably the case of those with Latin names also. Mr. Williams's attempt to identify the Pudens and Claudia of Martial (iv. 13., xi. 56.) with the converts mentioned by St. Paul (2 *Tim.* iv. 21.) is interesting; but we must not forget—1. that both these names are very common at the period: 2. that the name of Pudens in the Chichester inscription is only conjectural: 3. that the character Martial gives of Pudens is painfully inconsistent with the Christian profession. The Claudia of Martial was, he says, of British extraction. In our island, as in Gaul, many chiefs were enrolled no doubt in the imperial gens, and it is idle to assign this lady to any one British family in particular. At all events, the notion of Camden and Fuller, that she was a daughter of Caractacus domiciled in Rome, seems as plausible as that which derives her from Tib. Claudius Cogidubnus, the king of the Regni in Sussex. See, however, Williams's *Essay on Pudens*, &c., or an abstract of his arguments in Alford's *Greek Test.* iii. 104.

<sup>2</sup> Such, no doubt, should in strictness have been the demand of Judaism also: but there is ample evidence of the compromise which the Jews generally allowed to their half-attached followers and admirers. Herod, for instance, made no doubt conditions with them, like Naaman the Syrian, who stipulated that he should be allowed to bow, when he stood with his master in the temple of Rimmon. 2 *Kings*, v. 18.

possibly from a feeling of indulgence, as above explained, towards the new sect, refused to entertain the accusation himself, and referred it to the domestic tribunal of the husband and his kinsmen. Pomponia was examined by lenient judges, and by their tenderness, their ignorance, or their indifference, was suffered to escape unpunished. But it was remarked with awe by the frivolous society around her, that she withdrew from all conversation with them, shrank into the secret companionship of her own pensive meditations, and passed the rest of her life, which was prolonged many years, in reserve and retirement. Such, it would seem, were the effects, most foreign to the spirit of the age, which might be expected from conversion to Christianity in a noble matron of Rome.<sup>1</sup>

St. Paul was kept under restraint for at least two years, but soon after that period was set at liberty; a further testimony, it would appear, to the acknowledged offensiveness of his sect.<sup>2</sup> Yet in little more than another year we read with surprise of the sudden persecution directed against it by Nero, and we hear that he was induced to denounce the Christians as the authors of the conflagration, to propitiate the popular feeling; for none others were so detested for their *strange and mischievous superstition*, or so generally held *guilty of the most abominable crimes*, of the crime, indeed, of *hatred towards the whole human race*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 32. (A. U. 810): "Superstitionis externæ rea:" an expression which has been very generally interpreted of conversion to Christianity. See Lardner, *Testimonies*, i. 344. The Romans, indeed, ascribed Pomponia's long melancholy to grief for the murder of Julia by Messalina, fourteen years earlier. Tac. l. c.; Dion lx. 18. It seems not unreasonable to suppose that sorrow turned her mind to spiritual consolations.

<sup>2</sup> That the apostle was detained at Rome for two years appears from the conclusion of the *Acts*. His release is presumed on the authority of tradition embodied in the early church histories, and supported inferentially by the Epistles. Supposing him to have reached Rome early in 814 (A. D. 61), he may have quitted it again in 816, the year before the persecution.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 44.: "Per flagitia invisos . . . odio generis humani . . . fontes et novissima supplicia meritos." Suet. *Ner.* 16.: "Genus hominum superstitionis novæ et maleficæ."



The horror of the sacrifice will be enhanced if we consider the position and character of its victims, such as I have represented them. They were not a base and turbulent rabble like the mass of the Jewish residents, who had been more than once swept away by general edicts of exile or deportation; but a mixed company of Greeks and Romans, as well as Jews, some well-born, all perhaps instructed and accomplished, capable of appreciating the refined intelligence of the Apostle, all trained by habit, as well as by principle, to obey the laws, and respect the usages of those around them. Not only were men and women of gentle nature put to the most cruel of deaths,—not only was mockery added to their pangs,—but the process against them seems to have been more summary and informal than we read of in the persecutions of later times.<sup>1</sup>

Critical readers have, I believe, often felt a difficulty in accepting the plain assertions of Tacitus and Suetonius on this subject. They have remarked that there is nothing in the known habits and teaching of early Christianity to account for such infatuated hatred. If here and there a patrician convert vexed his kinsmen by withholding the domestic offering, such cases were at least extremely rare, nor would they be noticed by the vulgar, whose clamours alone are recorded. The usages of the disciples were indeterminate in their outward form; their tenets were mostly subjective; there was little in either that could openly clash with popular prejudices. The first Christians at Rome did not separate themselves from the heathens, nor renounce their ordinary callings; they

Difficulty of  
accounting for  
this supposed  
persecution of  
the Christians.

<sup>1</sup> This may be inferred, I think, from the words of Tacitus, compared with later accounts of the punctilious observance of form in the proceedings against the Christians. It was only towards the end of the last and worst of the persecutions, that of Diocletian, according to their own confession, that punishment was summarily inflicted. See Ruinart, præf. in *Act. Martyr.* p. xxix., from Eusebius. Up to that time every judicial sentence had been formally registered, and Christian inquirers, when they found these fewer than they had expected, declared that the registers had been tampered with. Comp. Prudentius, *Peristeph.* i. 75: "Chartulas blasphemus olim nam satelles abstulit."

intermarried with unbelievers, nor even in their unions with one another did they reject the ordinary forms of law.<sup>1</sup> It would seem that they burnt their dead after the Roman fashion, gathered their ashes into the sepulchres of their patrons, and inscribed over them the customary dedication to the *Divine Spirits*.<sup>2</sup> They wore no distinctive garb like the professors of philosophy; they continued to dwell in the midst of their unconverted countrymen, frequented their synagogues and respected their sabbaths, at the same time that they paid special honour to the day which followed the sabbath, as the day of their Lord's resurrection. Before St. Paul came among them they can hardly have had a ministry, nor can we speak with certainty of any definite provision being made even by him at Rome for this distinctive badge of an independent religion. Christianity with them was eminently a doctrine rather than a ceremonial. They invested, indeed, with mysterious significance their rites of Initiation and Communion; and in the typical language in which the meaning of these sacraments was shrouded the heathens might find a motive for jealousy.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, such mysteries were common to the pagan cults also, and the misconception eventually put on them in the case of the Christians was the consequence, perhaps, rather than the cause, of the odium in which the sect came itself to be held.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mixed marriages were denounced by Tertullian and Cyprian; but not, as far as we know, earlier. The ceremonial of Christian marriage, the espousals, the ring, and other particulars, are derived from heathen usage, nor is there any trace of a special church service in primitive times. The passage from Tertullian, *ad Uxor.* ii. 8, 9., proves nothing to the contrary. Christians made it a matter of conscience to obtain the consent and blessing of the bishop.

<sup>2</sup> Such is the interpretation which, it seems, must be given to the letters D. M. (*dis manibus*), which occur so frequently on the tombs of the early Christians at Rome. See Muratori in the *Roman Acad. Archeol.* xiii. 39. foll. (Light-foot, l. c.)

<sup>3</sup> As regards the Eucharist at least, the language of the Christian liturgies, which the further we inquire seem to remount higher in primitive antiquity, is more decided and uniform than that of the fathers.

<sup>4</sup> We do not know when the notorious calumnies against the Christian love-feasts were first propounded: but they are first referred to by the apologists in

The precipitate harshness, indeed, with which men and women of the world have judged the spirit of devotion in modern times, the sourness, the self-righteousness, the hypocrisy they have ascribed to it, may indicate to us the feeling with which such of the Romans as came personally in contact with this saintly community might regard its character and habits. They would express, no doubt more openly than our milder manners allow, their wonder, their vexation, and their scorn. But the atrocious language of Tacitus and Suetonius far transcends this limit, and we are lost in wonder at the charge of firing the city, with the general imputation of hating all mankind, against a sect so unobtrusive as well as so innocent. Nor can we fail to remark how short a time is allowed by our accounts for the growth of this hostile feeling. Up to the arrival of St. Paul the Christians form evidently an obscure and unorganized society; within three years from that date the whole city is filled with inveterate detestation of them. This is the more strange when we observe how little attention, except in this instance, Christianity attracted at this period in Rome. It has not been mentioned by Lucan, or the elder Pliny, though both these writers have noticed the manners of the Jews; nor by Seneca, though Seneca is full of the tenets of the philosophers; nor by Persius, though Persius is a shrewd observer of the salient features of society generally. Such is the silence of the contemporaries of St. Paul and Nero. Had the Christians occupied, even in the next generation, a large space in Roman eyes, could the painters of manners such as Juvenal and Martial, who have dashed in, with such glaring colours, Jews, Greeks, and Egyptians, have failed to fill their canvas with portraits and caricatures of them? <sup>1</sup> Half a century had passed from the Neronian per-

Christianity  
little noticed in  
Rome before,  
and for some  
time after, Nero.

the second or perhaps the third century. See Minucius Felix, *Octav.* 9.; Tertull. *Apol.* 3.; Athenagoras, 4.

<sup>1</sup> Juvenal alludes (vii. 257.) to the cause of Nero's persecution, and to the mode of punishment. Comp. also i. 155. Martial notices the fortitude of those who refused to sacrifice with the stake and pitched shirt before them



secution before we meet with the first charges now extant against them.

Such being the grounds for questioning the accuracy of our accounts of this matter, it has been suggested that it was  
 Question as to the persons designated as "Christians." against the Jews, not the Christians, the devotees of false Christs, not the worshippers of Jesus, the wolves of the Transtiberine, not the lambs of the Palatine, that Nero's edict was really directed. We have seen how obnoxious the Jews generally were to the bigotry of the Roman populace: they were reproached with their ferocity, isolation, and spiritual pride; the turbulence of their fanatical Christ seekers had already provoked both prince and people. The menacing attitude they held in their own country was a cause at this moment of increased exasperation. It was easy to imagine that the compatriots of the men who were levying war against Rome in Palestine had kindled a conflagration in the capital itself. Tiberius had gratified the popular clamour by deporting thousands of these wretches to Sardinia. Claudius had expelled them in a body from Rome. The people now stimulated Nero to make shorter and bloodier work with them; and the fanatics of the city were subjected to the same barbarous vengeance which had alighted repeatedly on their brethren in the mountains of Galilee and the wilderness of Judea. It is conjectured that our authorities, writing fifty years later, confused the Jews with the Christians. That Suetonius, in a previous statement, had fallen into such an error, is generally admitted. He may have done the same in this place. Tacitus, though a graver authority, is liable to the charge of colouring the events he describes with the hues of his own period. When he wrote the false Christs were extinguished and forgotten, but the true Christ had become notorious throughout the empire. The true believers, meek and inoffensive as they were, had succeeded, by an unjust fate, to all the odium which had

(x. 25.). This may refer to the later persecution of Trajan. There can be little doubt that this barbarous torture was invented before Nero (see Senec. *Epist.* 14.), and continued to be practiced after him.

popularly attached to the fanatics. On the Christians, regarded as a remnant or revival of Judaism, Tacitus, it may be supposed, bestowed all the bitterness which a terrible war had engendered in Roman breasts against everything Jewish.<sup>1</sup> They were lying at the moment under sentence of proscription by his master, Trajan: they were deserting the temples, withholding sacrifice from the imperial altars, meeting in secret and illicit conclave in the provinces, and Pliny, the friend of Tacitus, was inquiring how he should proceed towards them.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the historian may think of the charges of immorality calumniously preferred against them, their anticipations of a world-wide triumph, of the fall of the empire, and the dissolution of the age in fire, might be held as damning evidence against them, and entitle them in his view to a return of that scorn and hatred which they were deemed themselves to cherish against the whole frame of society.<sup>3</sup>

Such is the view recommended to us by the great name of Gibbon, which it is due perhaps to his character as an historian to lay before the reader. Though liable to the suspicion of interested motives, he is too Conjecture of Gibbon. shrewd to advance even an interested argument without reasonable grounds. But the existence of Christians in the time of Nero is no longer held to depend in any degree on the testimony of Tacitus, nor does the conjecture merit in

<sup>1</sup> It should be noticed, to show how readily Tacitus might confound the Jews and the Christians, that he characterizes both in precisely the same remarkable terms. Comp. of the Christians, *Ann.* xv. 44.: "Odio generis humani;" and of the Jews, *Hist.* v. 5.: "Adversus omnes alios hostile odium."

<sup>2</sup> Plin. *Epist.* x. 96. (97.): a letter supposed to have been written in the year 104, probably a few years earlier than the later books of the *Annals*.

<sup>3</sup> These topics had not been untouched by St. Paul; but it will be readily conceived that it was after the fall of Jerusalem and the publication of the Apocalypse that they became most prominent, and began to attract the notice of the heathens. Dr. Milman, feeling the difficulty which attaches to our accounts of the Neronian persecution, has suggested that the popular hatred towards the Christians, and belief in their guilt, were caused by their vaunts of an impending conflagration of the world. *Hist. of Christianity*, ii. 37.

itself the disdain, real or affected, with which our polemics have generally treated it.<sup>1</sup>

For myself, perplexed by the received account, yet scrupling to admit such entire misapprehension on the part of our authorities, I crave a fair consideration for another suggestion:—that the suspicions of the Roman mob were directed against the turbulent Jews, notorious for their appeals to the name of Christ, as an expected prince or leader:—that these fanatics, arrested and questioned, not so much of the burning as of their political creed, sought to implicate the true disciples, known to them and hated by them, however obscure and inoffensive in Roman eyes, in the same charge:<sup>2</sup>—that the true Christians, thus associated in the charge of Christ-worship, avowed the fact in their own sense, a sense which their judges did not care to discriminate:—that the believers became thus more or less sufferers, though doubly innocent both of the fire and of political disaffection:—finally, that our historians, misled by this false information, finding even in the public records that the name of Christ was the common shibboleth of the victims, too readily imagined that the persecution was directed against the *Christians* only. Frightful as this attack on the brethren was, it thus fell only obliquely upon them; it may be hoped that it was as transient as it was sudden. If we may draw any conclusions from the monuments lately discovered of the Claudian freedmen, it would seem that many of the disciples, whom St. Paul had greeted by name, died quietly in their beds. Though Christian writers have concurred in citing the Neronian as the first of their persecutions, it is remarkable that the Church has specified none of its victims among

Another view  
suggested.

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, *Decl. and Fall*, ch. xvi.

<sup>2</sup> The animosity of the Jews of the old faith to the Christian reformers is strongly marked in the *Acts* of the Apostles, and recurs again in almost the earliest documents of the first apostolic age. See particularly *Martyr. Polycarp.* c. 13.; Justin Martyr, *Dialog.* and *Apol.*; Tertullian, *adv. Judæos.* Tacitus himself points to the betrayal of one set of victims by another: “*primo correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens.*”



her noble army of Martyrs.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul himself is not supposed to have fallen on this occasion. Absent at the time from Rome, he returned there soon after; but in the epistle he wrote from thence within two or three years of this date, no allusion occurs to the recent sufferings of his disciples. The story that he was beheaded at Rome in the last year of Nero has been current from early times; but this tradition, however probable in itself, is attended with circumstances which show how little it was connected, in the minds of the first Christians, with the theory of a general proscription of their faith.<sup>2</sup>

The notion that Nero's measures extended to the provinces, or issued in a standing decree against Christianity, though attested by some of the ancients and much cherished by many moderns, rests on slender and equivocal testimony.<sup>3</sup> It was one thing to indulge the momentary rage of the populace, another to establish the principle of religious persecution. There seems no

General religious toleration under Nero.

<sup>1</sup> Mosheim, *De Rebus Christ. ante Constant. sæc. i.* § 34.

<sup>2</sup> For the presumed date of St. Paul's martyrdom I refer to the statement of Jerome: "xiv. Neronis anno," *Catal. c.* 5. Cyril of Jerusalem reported that his death was caused by a quarrel with Simon Magus, Chrysostom that he was punished for having converted Nero's mistress (*Cave's Life of St. Paul*). That St. Paul suffered at Rome has been a constant tradition from early times (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* ii. 25.; Origen, *in Gen.* iii.); but the argument from Clemens Romanus (i. 5., possibly the original authority for it) seems to me mere trifling. A Regius professor of divinity ought not to sanction the translation of *μαρτυρήσας ἐπὶ τῶν ἡγουμένων*, *martyrium subiens sub præfectis Urbis*; and a learned chronologer's illustration of the phrase by the *δύο ἀντοκράτορες* (Helius and Nero) of Dion, is an ingenious extravagance. Perhaps a cautious inquirer will be satisfied with the language of the apostle himself (2 *Tim.* iv. 6-16.), which indicates the expectation of speedy martyrdom, and may itself have suggested the ecclesiastical tradition.

<sup>3</sup> That the persecution extended to the provinces is first asserted by Orosius (vii. 71.). This notion is considered to be amply refuted by Dodwell (*Diss. Cypr.* xi.). See Gieseler, *Eccl. Hist.* i. 1. 28. The Lusitanian inscription is given up. That Nero issued a standing decree against Christianity, which continued to be the law of the empire, is roundly asserted by Tertullian (*ad Nation.* i. 7.), a writer prone to misinterpret facts to the advantage of his own argument.

reason to doubt that Nero respected the maxims of his country in tolerating generally all religions against which no public scandal could be alleged. The citizens were not restrained by law from practising foreign rites, provided they did not overtly reject those of the nation, and their conduct, even in this particular, was not jealously watched. The proselytes to Judaism, and even to Christianity, might possibly evade the required solemnities; the magistrates were lax, the bystanders were indifferent. As yet we meet with no indication of that uneasy apprehension of spiritual emotions, expressed by the specific inhibition of new and strange religions *by which the minds of men may be moved*, which marked a later period of Roman jurisprudence.<sup>1</sup> Toleration, indeed, on such a basis, constitutes no claim to a prudent liberality on the part of the Roman government. It was rather an unreflecting persistence in habits of thought derived from another state of society. The toleration of the empire was a relic of the proud exclusiveness of primitive ages, which never contemplated the possibility of the sons of Mars and Rhea deigning to bow before the gods of enemies and strangers; which had no fear of innovation, nor appreciated the risks of conversion. The government indulged in indolent security while the foundations of the old ideas were crumbling away. The active growth of Christianity first opened the eyes of rulers and people. The sword had been long suspended over the Christians; sometimes it had descended, and the disciples, always insecure, had been made to suffer; but whenever the jealousy of the state was awakened, no special edict was required to drag them before the altar of Jupiter, and invite them to sprinkle it with incense, and conceive a vow to the genius of the emperor.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul. *Sentent.* v. 21. 2. "Novæ et usu incognitæ, quibus mentes hominum moveantur."

<sup>2</sup> The fact that Nero's was the first persecution, the barbarities attending it, possibly also the notoriety given to it by the narrative of Tacitus, impressed later generations of Christians with a peculiar horror of this tyrant. But the notion that he was the Antichrist of the Apocalypse, and that he should return

The Roman Empire, at this epoch, was like one of the statues so common at the time, in which a new head had been fitted to the original trunk; and as the sculptor, passing his finger-nail along the marble, assured himself that the juncture was not sensible to the touch, so the citizens might believe, under the widespread liberty of thought they actually enjoyed, that the fatal severance between freedom and despotism was not to be detected by the nicest organs.<sup>1</sup> But beneath the more refined and sensitive classes of the capital, those which claimed the privilege of thought and knew how to use it, lay next the multitude of triflers and idlers, the rich voluptuaries, the pampered officials, the upstart freedmen of the emperor and his courtiers, who, environed as they were with perils, endured the tyranny of the Cæsars for the sake of their own ease and luxury, and were content to enjoy the present hour without regard to the past or the future. Minds enervated by indulgence, shattered by vice, estranged from all high and pure aspirations by the pleasures of sense, were unable to cope with despotism: these men could only crouch like dogs under the uplifted arm of their master; they had not energy even to fly from it. Whatever indignation they might feel towards the tyrant, they could only vent it in spiteful demonstrations against his creatures, and he could at any time avert their murmurs from himself by throwing to them a victim from his own court or household. Then was revealed on the public stage of history the secret to which the interior of every private house could testify, of the fearful union which may subsist between soft voluptuous manners and cal-

The govern-  
ment of Nero  
supported by  
the voluptuous-  
ness and cruelty  
of the age.

in power from the Euphrates (xiii. 3., xvi. 12., xvii. 8. 16.; comp. Neander, *Pflanzung und Leitung*, p. 480.), cannot be traced to primitive times. The date of the pseudo-Sibylline oracle, εἰτ' ἀνακάμψει ἰσάζων θεῶ αὐτόν is very uncertain. St. Augustine (*Civ. Dei.* xx. 19.) speaks of the belief as common, but not universal, in his day: "Nonnulli ipsum resurrecturum, et futurum Anti-Christum suspiciantur." Comp. Lactantius, *de Mort. Persecut.* c. 2., and some verses of Commodianus, possibly of the third century.

<sup>1</sup> Pers. *Sat.* i. 64.: "Ut per læve severos Effundat junctura ungues."



lous ferocity of disposition. Then the men whose own muscles were flaccid with the abuse of the bath, the table, and the couch, were seen to gloat with horrid fascination over the pangs of physical suffering they wantonly inflicted. The cruelty of the women vied with that of the men. To these cynical sensualists, with a depravity of feeling unfortunately not uncommon, the spectacle of virtue tormented would be a positive enjoyment; and there is too much reason to apprehend that by them the despotism of a Nero was supported for the gratification it ministered to their fiendish maliciousness.

The corrupt morality of the age, pervading all ranks and classes, was, above all, the cause of the patient endurance of tyranny which so lamentably distinguished it. With the loss of self-respect engendered by merely selfish indulgences men lose that keen sense of wrong even when inflicted on themselves, which nerves the hand of resistance more vigorously than fear or pain. The distrust which the victim of Tiberius and Nero conceived for all around him, from the consciousness of his own turpitude, paralysed every attempt at combination. The vices common to all great cities flourished with rank luxuriance in the capital of a society thus depraved and soulless. Sensuality in its most degrading forms pervaded all classes, and was fostered by the publicity of ordinary life, by the allurements of art, sometimes by the direct injunctions of a gross superstition, to a degree of shamelessness which has made it the opprobrium of history. Doubtless the iniquities of Rome have been more nakedly exposed than those of modern cities by the unblushing frankness of its moralists and satirists; but their frankness or effrontery was itself a product of the licentiousness of the age: Juvenal would have cast a veil over the wantonness he chastised, if public decorum had seemed in the least to require it. The distinguishing vices of the great were meanness and servility, the pursuit of money by every artifice and compliance: they had little of the sense of honour which forms an exterior bulwark even to feeble moral

Reflections on  
the depraved  
morality of the  
age.

principles among ourselves. The poor, on the other hand, with their dearest wants and pleasures provided for them, were not stimulated to dishonesty by the dire struggle for life, or even by the thirst of advancement, which are at once the bane and the preserving salt of modern society. But they were brutal, bloodthirsty, callous to the infliction of pain, familiar in daily life with cruelties such as we shudder to hear of in modern times under the influence of violent passions, in the momentary excesses of popular outbreaks. Much candour and discrimination are required in comparing the sins of one age with those of another, still more in pronouncing between them, especially where the hideousness of the subject must deter us from dragging them fully into light: but we must not be led to lay upon Pagan Idolatry too large a share of the reproach from which even true religion has not been exempted; for Christianity, divine as it is in its precepts and its sanctions, has proved but weak in contending against the passions of our corrupt nature: the cruelty of our Inquisitions and sectarian persecutions, of our laws against sorcery, our serfdom and our slavery; the petty fraudulence we tolerate in almost every class and calling of the community; the bold front worn by our open sensuality; the deeper degradation of that which is concealed; all these leave us little room for boasting of our modern discipline, and must deter the thoughtful inquirer from too confidently contrasting the morals of the old world and the new.

The fairest, perhaps, and certainly the most pleasing comparison we can make between modern and ancient civilization, between the effect of a divine and a human teaching, lies in the virtues they may seem respectively to have fostered: for we must not forget that even under heathenism there was always a moral teaching at work, and amidst all the incentives to vice, instruction was never wanting in virtue. However feebly the voice of religion or philosophy may have fallen on the ears of the multitude, the circumstances of daily life read constant lessons in love and honesty. Human nature indeed, like run-

Counteracting  
principles of  
virtue.

ning water, has a tendency to purify itself by action; the daily wants of life call forth corresponding duties, and duties daily performed settle into principles, and ripen into graces. Even at Rome in the worst of times, men of affairs, particularly those in middle stations, most removed from the temptations of luxury and poverty, were in the habitual practice of integrity and self-denial; mankind had faith in the general honesty of their equals, in the justice of their patrons, in the fidelity of their dependents: husbands and wives, parents and children, exercised the natural affections, and relied on their being reciprocated: all the relations of life were adorned in turn with bright instances of devotion, and mankind transacted their business with an ordinary confidence in the force of conscience and right reason. The steady development of enlightened legal principles conclusively proves the general dependence upon law as a guide and corrector of manners. In the camp however, more especially, as the chief sphere of this purifying activity, the great qualities of the Roman character continued to be plainly manifested. The history of the Cæsars presents to us a constant succession of brave, patient, resolute, and faithful soldiers, men deeply impressed with a sense of duty, superior to vanity, despisers of boasting, content to toil in obscurity and shed their blood at the frontiers of the empire, unrepining at the cold mistrust of their masters, not clamorous for the honours so sparingly awarded them, but satisfied in the daily work of their hands, and full of faith in the national destiny which they were daily accomplishing. If such humble instruments of society around them are not to be compared for the importance of their mission with the votaries of speculative wisdom, who protested in their lives and in their deaths against the crimes of their generation, there is still something touching in the simple heroism of these chiefs of the legions, of which we have met already with some bright examples, and shall encounter many more,—the heroism of a Plautius, a Suetonius, a Vespasian, a Corbulo, and an Agricola,—which preserves to us in unbroken succession the features of the Scipios, the Catos, the



Æmiliï, and the Marcelli. Here are virtues, not to be named indeed with the zeal of missionaries and the devotion of martyrs, but worthy nevertheless of a high place in the esteem of all who reverence human nature, which may prove, in the teeth of some thoughtless fanatics, that the age was not utterly degraded which furnished the first votaries to the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

The acceptance of Christianity we should consider not so much a strong reaction from the prevailing wickedness of the age, as a symptom of the aspirations struggling beneath its surface, and of its anxious demand for moral convictions. I have shown in another place that the Gospel was not embraced, on its first promulgation in Judea, by the despair of the most wretched outcasts of humanity, but rather by the hopeful enthusiasm which urges those who enjoy a portion of the goods of life to improve and fortify their possession. And so again, at Rome we have no reason to suppose that Christianity was only the refuge of the afflicted and miserable; rather, if we may lay any stress upon the monuments above referred to, it was first embraced by persons in a certain grade of comfort and respectability; by persons approaching to what we should call *the middle classes* in their condition, their education and their moral views. Of this class Seneca himself was the idol, the oracle: he was, so to say, the favourite preacher of the more intelligent and humane disciples of nature and virtue. Now the writings of Seneca show, in their way, a real anxiety among this class to raise the moral tone of mankind around them: a spirit of reform, a zeal for the conver-

Christianity  
congenial to  
certain moral  
tendencies of  
the age.

<sup>1</sup> These remarks, I know, are liable to misconstruction, but it seems a duty to protest against the common tendency of Christian moralists to dwell only on the dark side of Pagan society, in order to heighten by contrast the blessings of the Gospel. The argument becomes dangerous when the treatment of it is unfair. The pretensions advanced by such an advocate as Count Champagny for the Roman Church, which alone he identifies with Christianity, to be the sole depository of all moral principles and practice, are distressing to those who reflect how fearfully they have been belied by the result.

sion of souls, which, though it never rose indeed, under the teaching of the philosophers, to boiling heat, still simmered with genial warmth on the surface of society. Far different as was their social standing point, far different as were the foundations and the presumed sanctions of their teaching respectively, Seneca and St. Paul were both moral reformers; both, be it said with reverence, were fellow-workers in the cause of humanity, though the Christian could look beyond the proximate aims of morality, and prepare men for a final development on which the Stoic could not venture to gaze. Hence there is so much in their principles, so much even in their language, which agrees together, so that the one has been thought, though it must be allowed without adequate reason, to have borrowed directly from the other.<sup>1</sup> But the philosopher, be it remembered, discoursed to a large and not inattentive audience, and surely the soil was not all unfruitful on which his seed was scattered, when he proclaimed that *God dwells not in temples of wood or stone, nor wants the ministrations of human hands:*<sup>2</sup> *that He has no delight in the blood of victims:*<sup>3</sup> *that He is near to all his creatures:*<sup>4</sup> *that His spirit resides in men's hearts:*<sup>5</sup> *that all men are truly His offspring:*<sup>6</sup> *that we are members of one body, which is God or nature:*<sup>7</sup> *that men must believe in God before they can approach Him:*<sup>8</sup> *that the true service of God is to be like unto Him:*<sup>9</sup> *that all men have sinned,*

<sup>1</sup> It is hardly necessary to refer to the pretended letters between St. Paul and Seneca. Besides the evidence from style, some of the dates they contain are quite sufficient to condemn them as clumsy forgeries. They are mentioned, but with no expression of belief in their genuineness, by Jerome and Augustine. See Jones, *On the Canon*, ii. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Senec. *Ep.* 95., and in Lactantius, *Inst.* vi.

<sup>3</sup> *Ep.* 116.: "Colitur Deus non tauris sed pia et recta voluntate."

<sup>4</sup> *Ep.* 41. 73.

<sup>5</sup> *Ep.* 46.: "Sacer intra nos spiritus sedet."

<sup>6</sup> *De Provid.* i.

<sup>7</sup> *Ep.* 93. 95.: "Membra sumus magni corporis."

<sup>8</sup> *Ep.* 95.: "Primus Deorum cultus est Deos credere."

<sup>9</sup> *Ep.* 95.: "Satis coluit quisquis imitatus est."

*and none performed all the works of the law :<sup>1</sup> that God is no respecter of nations, ranks, or conditions, but all, barbarian and Roman, bond and free, are alike under His all-seeing Providence.<sup>2</sup>*

St. Paul enjoined submission and obedience even to the tyranny of Nero, and Seneca fosters no ideas subversive of political subjection. Endurance is the paramount virtue of the Stoic. To forms of government the wise man was wholly indifferent; they were among the external circumstances above which his spirit soared in serene self-contemplation. We trace in Seneca no yearning for a resortation of political freedom, nor does he even point to the senate, after the manner of the patriots of the day, as a legitimate check to the autocracy of the despot. The only mode, in his view, of tempering tyranny is to educate the tyrant himself in virtue. His was the self-denial of the Christians, but without their anticipated compensation. It seems impossible to doubt that in his highest flights of rhetoric,—and no man ever recommended the unattainable with a finer grace,—Seneca must have felt that he was labouring to build up a house without foundations; that his system, as Caius said of his style, was sand without lime. He was surely not unconscious of the inconsistency of his own position, as a public man and a minister, with the theories to which he had wedded himself; and of the impossibility of preserving in it the purity of his character as a philosopher or a man. He was aware that in the existing state of society at Rome, wealth was necessary to men high in station: wealth

Seneca's political and moral teaching.

Inconsistency between his teaching and his conduct.

<sup>1</sup> Senec. *de Ira*, i. 14.; ii. 27.: "Quis est iste qui se profitetur omnibus legibus innocentem?"

<sup>2</sup> *De Benef.* iii. 18.: "Virtus omnes admittit libertinos, servos, reges." These and many other passages are collected by Champagny, ii. 546., after Fabricius and others, and compared with well-known texts in Scripture. The version of the Vulgate shows a great deal of verbal correspondence. M. Trolong remarks, after De Maistre, that Seneca has written a fine book on Providence, for which there was not even a name at Rome in the time of Cicero. *L'Influence du Christianisme*, &c., i. ch. 4.



alone could retain influence, and a poor minister became at once contemptible. The distributor of the imperial favours must have his banquets, his receptions, his slaves and freedmen; he must possess the means of attracting if not of bribing; he must not seem too virtuous, too austere, among an evil generation; in order to do good at all he must swim with the stream, however polluted it might be. All this inconsistency Seneca must have contemplated without blenching; and there is something touching in the serenity he preserved amidst the conflict that must have perpetually raged between his natural sense and his acquired principles. Both Cicero and Seneca were men of many weaknesses, and we remark them the more because both were pretenders to unusual strength of character: but while Cicero lapsed into political errors, Seneca cannot be absolved of actual crime. Nevertheless, if we may compare the greatest masters of Roman wisdom together, the Stoic will appear, I think, the more earnest of the two, the more anxious to do his duty for its own sake, the more sensible of the claims of mankind upon him for such precepts of virtuous living as he had to give. In an age of unbelief and compromise, he taught that Truth was positive and Virtue objective. He conceived, what never entered Cicero's mind, the idea of improving his fellow-creatures: he had, what Cicero had not, a heart for conversion to Christianity.

The advance of moral principles between the age of Cicero and Seneca is strongly marked by the favour with which the expression has been received that the Stoic was *enveloped, as it were, in the atmosphere of Christianity*.<sup>1</sup> We possess one other small volume of the moral teaching of the time, comprising the six satires of

Aulus Persius a  
teacher of  
Stoicism.

<sup>1</sup> Troplong, l. c., who cannot altogether give up the significance of the phrase, "Seneca noster," so common with the fathers of the church. See St. Jerome, *de Script. Eccl.* c. 12.; Tertull. *de Anim.* 1.; August. *de Civ. Dei*, vi. 10. He adds: "Sa correspondance avec S. Paul, quoique apoeryphe, ne vaut-elle pas d'ailleurs comme mythe?" I have already mentioned the coincidence of the use of "caro" in Seneca and St. Paul. Troplong says that "angelus"

the poet Persius, himself also a Stoic, and a pupil of the Stoic Cornutus, the friend and probably the freedman of the family of Seneca. Aulus Persius was born in the year 787, and died in the middle of Nero's reign, at the early age of twenty-eight. Possessed of ample means, and with weakly health, he engaged in no public affairs, but devoted himself entirely to philosophical speculation, to which he did honour by the purity and simplicity of his private life. The fastidiousness, perhaps, rather than the ardour of his virtue urged him to step forth as a moral reformer: the passion of his contemporaries for verse composition suggested to him the vehicle of poetical satire rather than of prose dissertation; and his lucubrations, curious and not uninteresting as they are, have doubtless been preserved to us only by the accident of the form in which they have been conveyed. Of the poetical merit of these singular compositions I have no occasion here to speak: they have been variously judged; but those who have criticized most severely their jejuneness in thought and general crabbedness of expression, have done scant justice to the smartness of observation and felicity of language with which they occasionally glitter.<sup>1</sup> In a moral point of view, however, they are not without their significance. A comparison of the satires of Persius with those of Horace may serve to mark the progress of the age in ethical principles. Horace shoots folly as it flies: his bolts are either flung at random for his own amusement, or, as I have elsewhere suggested, have a covert political object: there is neither love of truth, nor indignation at vice, nor scorn of baseness, nor a

occurs also in its biblical sense in the writings of the philosopher. But the great subject of the presumed influence of Christianity on the moral teaching of this and later periods may be conveniently reserved for another occasion. M. Denis, in his recent work, *Idées Morales dans l'Antiquité*, has traced some Christian maxims far back into the region of heathen philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> M. Nisard's judgment on Persius is harsh and unfair (*Études sur les Poètes Lat. de la Décadence*, i. 201.) The passages from Boileau which he cites in comparison are sufficient to demonstrate the superiority of the third in rank of the Roman satirists over the first of the moderns.

generous wish to amend error. But Persius is not a man of the world amusing himself with his fellow-creatures; he is a philosopher seeking to understand them, and still further, he is a philosopher of the age and school of Seneca, really anxious to instruct them. He recalls men to true wisdom by showing not the sin or folly, or the evil consequences of their passions, but their inconsistency. Men and women, he lets us know, are not true philosophers: they say one thing and do another, in youth and age, in public and private life, in the street and in the chamber, with no intention to deceive, but from defective education.<sup>1</sup> Genuine philosophy alone can teach them to choose the right path and to keep it: this is the training which makes men true to themselves and to society. This is a wisdom which it is in the power of every man to attain: and this wisdom he shows us by his own example is *Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose, but musical as is Apollo's lute*. The philosophy of the Porch was never so persuasively recommended as by the charming verses in which Persius sings of the influence Cornutus exercised on his youthful affections, and the perfect harmony which subsisted in heart and soul between the master and the pupil, into whose purged ear he had instilled the fruitful seed of Cleanthes.<sup>2</sup>

It has been supposed that, in his strictures on the bad taste of contemporary versifiers, Persius has covertly reflect-

<sup>1</sup> Thus, the temple-worshipper is inconsistent when he thinks he can seduce the pure and holy gods (ii. 4.): the tyrant, who thinks himself powerful but is really the slave of his terrors (iii. 42.): the sick man who resents his physician's advice (iii. 88.). Every man pretends to be different from what he really is (iv. 23.). Men acknowledge the necessity of wisdom, but put off seeking it (v. 66.). They seek for liberty and fancy they have gained it, when they are really slaves to vice and passion (v. 125.).

<sup>2</sup> Persius, *Sat.* v. 45.:

“Non equidem hoc dubites amborum fœdere certo  
Consentire dies, et ab uno sidere nasci. . . .  
Cultor enim juvenum purgatas inseris aures  
Frugæ Cleanthea. Petite hinc, juvenesque senesque,  
Finem animo certum, miserisque viatica canis.”



ed on the effeminacy of Nero's own compositions.<sup>1</sup> Be this as it may, it should be remembered that the poet was dead before the prince had made himself generally infamous for worse faults than those of style and sentiment. Nevertheless, it is deserving of remark that the sage, the moralist, the reformer, has not uttered a single word on the political aspect of the times; no breath of indignation at the servile submission of his countrymen, of consolation for broken-hearted patriots, of encouragement for the few gallant spirits who still might hope for better days to come. Persius betrays no consciousness of the degradation of his countrymen, nor yearning for the recovery of their ancient liberties. A single allusion to the freedom of the Athenians of old suggests only the recollection of the deceptions practised upon them by their demagogues:<sup>2</sup> to the Senate, once the real bulwark of Roman independence, still something more than the mere shadow of a great name, he makes no allusion whatever. The philosopher, like the Christian, is content that men should work out the appointed end of their being under the circumstances in which Providence has placed them.

No political philosophy in the writings of Persius.

A more important contribution to the history of mind and opinion at this period, is supplied by the *Pharsalia* of Lucan, a work doubly interesting, both from its own peculiar merits as a poem, and from the fate of its distinguished author. Lucan, as we have seen, was the chosen companion of Nero's early days, being of about the same age, and showing much of the ready and brilliant talent which might charm a youth of Nero's temper and accomplishments. The stories that are told of their rivalry in poetical exertitions; of the success of the subject and the jealousy of the prince; of the taunts with which the one resented this jealousy, and the other's revenge by forbidding him to recite in public;

The "*Pharsalia*" of Lucan.

Tradition of the relations between Lucan and Nero accounted for.

<sup>1</sup> Pers. *Sat.* i. 99. foll.

<sup>2</sup> Persius, *Sat.* iv. 20.:

"Dinomaches ego sum, suffla; sum candidus: esto:

Dum ne deterius sapiat pannucea Baucis."

finally, of the stifled wrath which led the offended bard to conspire against the tyrant's life;—all these may in the main be true, though possibly coloured and exaggerated. For my own part, I am disposed to believe that they grew out of an attempt to account for the change of sentiment,—as it appears at least to an ordinary observer,—between the commencement and the continuation of Lucan's poem. We have remarked already the vehement strain of panegyric upon Nero which ushers in the great Epic of the Civil Wars: and when we consider that the author perished at the age of twenty-six, in the eleventh year of Nero's reign, we can hardly throw back the period of this dedication to the golden era of the Quinquennium. It must be allowed that the tyrant had already revealed much of the evil of his character when the courtier dared to canonize his virtues; if the stern republicanism of the poem as it advances was an after-thought, it cannot be excused on the common plea, that the vices of tyranny were undiscovered at its commencement.

Lucan not inconsistent in his flattery of Nero.

But after all, this presumed change is a gratuitous imputation. To Nero himself, after the opening invocation, there is no farther allusion; and if, as the current of his verse rolls on, his appeals to the spirit of liberty and denunciations of tyranny become more vehement and frequent, we must not suppose that Lucan regarded the principate as a tyranny, or, till the last moment of personal pique or indignation, the prince himself as a tyrant.<sup>1</sup> It would be a still greater mistake to represent the panegyric on Nero as covert irony. Lucan was perfectly in earnest. The poem, as we know, was left unfinished at his death, and though the books may have been successively recited to friends, it was not, as far as we can judge, definitively pub-

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the *Pharsalia* there is no stronger expression of republican indignation than in lines which occur towards the end of the first book:

“Superos quid prodest poscere finem?  
Cum domino pax ista venit: duc, Roma, malorum  
Continuam seriem, clademque in tempora multa  
Extrahe, civili tantum jam libera bello.”

lished in the author's lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Whatever his cause of quarrel might be, I suppose that Lucan, had he deliberately changed his opinion on the necessity of a chief ruler, might have taken measures for expunging the passage in which it is so emphatically asserted.

But we must not deceive ourselves. Lucan was a vehement patriot. He was an ardent admirer of the historic liberties of his country. He sighed from wounded pride and offended virtue, at the remembrance of the latter days of the republic, and believed that Rome had forfeited her appointed privilege of universal conquest since she surrendered the pledges of her freedom.<sup>2</sup> But what was the freedom he so fiercely regretted? It was the rule of his own class, the licence to enjoy the fruits of conquest claimed, seized, and jealously guarded by the nobles and senate in defiance of the rights of every other class of citizens, of the subject provincials, and of the world at large. Critics have asked, who is the hero of the *Pharsalia*? Is it Cæsar, or Pompeius, or Cato? It is none of the three, it may be answered; it is the Senate. Liberty and the Senate are for ever in the poet's mouth, as correlative terms; but he has no yearnings for the people: of the knights as an order in the state he never once speaks.<sup>3</sup> The Senate is his idol, its temple is the Curia, and its priests are the consuls: but he has no incense for tribunes and chiefs of the Comitia and the

Lucan a partisan of the senate, not of the people.

<sup>1</sup> Collections of small poems such as odes, epigrams, and satires, were published in separate books; but we know of the *Aeneid*, and we may infer the same of other works of similar pretensions, that portions were first recited to select audiences, but the poem reserved for publication as a whole. The same appears to have been the case with the *Metamorphoses*. The story that the first three books of the *Pharsalia* were corrected and published by the writer comes from an old commentary of no authority. They are in no respect more correct than the later books.

<sup>2</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* vii. 426.:

“Sed retro tua fata tulit, par omnibus annis,  
Emathiæ funesta dies: hac luce cruenta  
Effectum, ut Latios non horreat India fasces;” &c.

<sup>3</sup> The complacency with which the Senate is assumed to be the governing



Forum. The idea he had conceived of the policy of the Republic was a dignified oligarchy of patrician nobles, born to sway the voters of the Campus from the steps of the temple of Bellona, to stride without partners or rivals over every province of the empire they had acquired by the blood of their plebeian clients. The descendants of the fallen oligarchy, in the ardour of their pretended patriotism, had completely forgotten the tribes as an element of their ancient constitution, and in their aspirations for the revival of liberty never dreamed of restoring to them any portion of their power. In the emperor's principate or first place in the senate they fully acquiesced; they did not grudge him his seat of honour between the consuls; it was of his tribunate, his championship of the people, that they were alone really jealous. The idea they entertained of a glorious revolution was

He had no wish to abolish the empire, only to subordinate the emperor to the senate.

not the abolition of the empire; they desired only to eliminate from it the popular element, and restrict it solely to a government through the senate. They would have suffered their chief to command their armies, as long as he held his command by decree of the senate, not by a law of the people. They would have felt it as no encroachment on their special rights that he should sway half the provinces as imperator or proconsul. Such of the emperors as had sought to gain the favour of the aristocracy had sedulously humoured these selfish views. Nero, following the precepts of Augustus and the example of Claudius, had sunk the tribune in the princeps, and accordingly Nero was long popular with the senators. It was not till he began in his caprice to make war upon them

order of the state is very instructive. See particularly the opening of the fifth book of the *Pharsalia*:

"Docuit populos venerabilis Ordo  
Non Magni partes, sed Magnum in partibus esse. . . .  
Cunctaque *jussuri* primum hoc decernite Patres. . . .  
Consulite in medium, Patres, Magnumque *jubete*  
Esse *ducem*. . . ."

With equal complacency the people are left to Cæsar, v. 382. 392., &c.

personally that he became personally hateful to them; but even then his government, still administered to a great extent by their order, retained its hold on their consideration, and the fiercest patriots among them never contemplated its overthrow. They might hope to remove Nero from its head, and to replace him by a puppet of their own; but even Lucan himself, the disciple of Cato, when he girded himself like Brutus with a dagger to take Cæsar's life, had no thought of restoring the republic of free elections and popular magistracies. We shall find, as we proceed in this history, that Tacitus himself, a patriot of calmer judgment, was abundantly satisfied when he found the senate placed ostensibly at the head of affairs, and the emperors affecting to be no more than its hand and its mouth-piece. Under Nerva and Trajan the Roman liberals believed that they had recovered the days of Catulus and Pompeius.

But to Lucan, after all, whatever it might be to men of more reflection and experience, the idea of the senate was a mere phantom, an abstraction of the imagination. Our poet was a youth, bred a declaimer of the schools, the child and pupil of declaimers and rhetoricians, and his mind had never been opened either by training or observation to views of actual life. It had become irksome to men of age and experience to mingle in public affairs which they were not suffered to conduct, and the young competitors for civil distinction were left without control to indulge the ardour of speculative opinion. There was no moral check on their thoughts, none on their speech: the new impulse given to popular composition by the advent of Nero to power raised a race of schoolboys to illegitimate authority in the world of letters. *Young Rome* of the time of Nero was eminently conceited, and I fear eminently shallow. Placing Seneca at their head, as is the wont of the rising generation to shelter under a great name its own conscious self-distrust, the favourites of the prince, accepted at the same time as the favourites of the multitude, overbore the finest taste and judgment of the veterans of literature. The

Characteristics  
of Lucan and  
his contemporaries.

faults and vices of youth were admired, humoured, and stimulated. Reserve and modesty, persevering toil, patient self-examination, were regarded as irksome in themselves, and as a reflection on the character of the prince. Talent flourished in such an atmosphere, as in a forcing-house, but it was no climate for the natural ripening of genius. The wit and cleverness of Lucan, considering his years, are preternatural: the trumpet-tones of his scorn or admiration, after more than thirty years' familiarity, still thunder in my ears with startling intensity: but he has no divination of men and things; his imagination never clothes itself in the costume of the past; he is never transported out of himself; he never *saw* the conqueror of the Gauls; he never *trod* the plains of Emathia. If he is to be compared at all with the inspired singer of the *Æneid*, pensive, passionate, and abstracted, I know not what more to his advantage can be said, than the remark of Statius, that the Epic of Lucan was an earlier effort than the first prolusions of Virgil.<sup>1</sup>

Next to Liberty Lucan chanted the praises of Philosophy, and his views of the one had as little of truth and sense as of the other. He proclaimed himself a follower of Lucan's views of philosophy. the Stoics, and no man has set forth their views, such as he conceived them, with more spirited and sounding phrases. If, however, we examine them, we discover in them all the vagueness and uncertainty of the teaching of the day; it is impossible to gather from the verses of Lucan whether the poet or his masters believed in the existence of the gods, or moral government of the world. These doctrines are repeatedly asserted, and again not less repeatedly denied.<sup>2</sup> Fate, the idol of the Stoics, plays a great part on

<sup>1</sup> Statius, *Sylv.* ii. 7. 73.:

“Hæc primo juvenis canes sub ævo  
Ante annos Culicis Maroniani.”

According to the life of Lucan ascribed to Suetonius, this was the poet's own boastful comparison: “Et quantum mihi restat ad Culicem!”

<sup>2</sup> The *Pharsalia* is full of auguries, visions, and other testimonies to super-



the Pharsalian stage; yet once, at least, the poet does not scruple to declare his uncertainty whether Apollo prophesies that which is fated, or fate is that which Apollo prophesies.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, in his view at least one manifest destiny, the law of nature which justifies Rome's dominion over the world. While he throws aside the old contracted notions of the individuality of nations, and affirms, with the emphasis of Seneca, the common origin and rights of all mankind, he never shrinks from the glaring inconsistency of his creed as a Roman with his creed as a philosopher.

Nevertheless this philosophy, crude as it is, has availed to soften his feelings at least in one particular. No Roman poet dwells with such warmth as Lucan on the sentiment of conjugal affection.<sup>2</sup> There is a sweetness in more than one passage of the *Pharsalia*, where it pauses on its stately march to indulge in a moment's tenderness, which little harmonizes with its author's general harshness, and may be taken as a tribute perhaps to the merits of a consort worthy of his genius, whose devotion to his memory was recorded in fitting strains by the next generation.<sup>3</sup> But this appreciation of the gentle influence which

His general deficiency in imagination.

natural power: the author repeatedly invokes the gods; but he makes no use of mythological machinery, and more than once expressly denies the existence of a superintending Providence: vii. 447. 454.:

"Mentimur regnare Jovem . . . . mortalia nulli  
Sunt curata Deo."

<sup>1</sup> *Phars.* v. 92.:

"Sive canit fatum, seu, quod jubet ipse, canendo  
Fit fatum."

<sup>2</sup> Comp. the passion of Pompeius and Cornelia, v. 725-815., viii. 40-158., ix. 51-116. Even the sterner esteem of Cato and Marcia has a touch of sentiment and enthusiasm.

<sup>3</sup> Statius, l. c. 120.:

"Adsis lucidus, et vocante Polla,  
Unum, quæso, diem Deos silentum  
Exores; solet hoc patere limen  
Ad nuptas redeuntibus maritis.  
Hæc te non thiasis proeas dolosis  
Falsi numinis induit figuras;

soothes most effectively the ills of life, is beyond the experience of youth, and shows a power of imagination in Lucan which we miss with regret in many passages of his Epic more brilliant in conception, and more sonorous in language. His general deficiency indeed in this faculty is most strikingly exhibited in the descriptions of physical suffering in which he seems to revel. His ever-recurring pictures of death and wounds, of diseases and famines, are coarse material painting, in which he only aims at representing vividly the scenes he has himself witnessed in the amphitheatres, or possibly in the streets of his own city. He has treasured up in his mind all the horrors which have been presented to his senses, nor has he the art or delicacy to create the effect required by generalities and abstractions. This is the common fault of young writers; it is to be feared, however, that it was eminently the fault of the age also; it sprang from the hard materialism engendered by sensual indulgence, from a terrible familiarity with objects the most painful and disgusting, and a cynical freedom of life and conversation.

Another feature of Lucan's *Pharsalia* is its affectation of encyclopædic knowledge, not perhaps characteristic of the man himself so much as of the period which boasted the vast compilations of Strabo's Geography and Pliny's Natural History. Astronomy and astrology, geography mathematical and terrestrial, antiquities and philosophy, mythology and navigation,—all these branches of science have their attractions for the young academician: wild and confused as his views of them often are, caught up from the teaching of many masters, and never as it seems digested in the mind of the pupil, they exhibit the appetite of the age for indiscriminate knowledge, an age of facts rather than of principles.<sup>1</sup> They afford a glimpse of

Affectation of  
encyclopædic  
knowledge.

Ipsam sed colit et frequentet ipsam,  
Imis altius insitum medullis."

Comp. Martial, vii. 21.

<sup>1</sup> Among other passages the reader may be referred for Lucan's ideas of astronomy to ix. 631.; of astrology to i. 660.; of geography to i. 396., ii. 399.,

the diversified subjects of intellectual occupation and moral interest which a world-wide empire afforded, when all the races of mankind, their climes and their characters, seemed brought into one focus. Amidst the material luxury and the rampant vices of the times, they show that there was still room for mental cultivation, which must have kept many hearts pure and single, and arrested the degeneracy of society. By literature, and possibly by domestic interests, Lucan seems himself to have been saved from the contagion around him. His poem, considering the atmosphere of voluptuousness in which he moved, is singularly free from all indelicacy of thought and language.<sup>1</sup> Modesty, indeed, was a tradition of the Roman Epic; vices which passed current in every circle of contemporary society are never so much as named by the singers of the life heroic: but that Lucan should exhibit the same instinct as Virgil, that Cæsar and Pompeius should be robed for us in the decent drapery of Æneas and Turnus, is much to the credit of the poet, and possibly of his age also. It would seem that amidst the general dissolution of principles some ideas retained their influence and enforced a religious self-restraint; wild as was the licence of the age, it had its recognised limits; a certain sense of decorum, however illogical we may deem it, still preserved its sway over the chartered libertines of Rome.<sup>2</sup> It may be added that while

iii. 171., iv. 51., vi. 333., ix. 411., x. 268.; of history to ii. 69., x. 20.; of antiquities to ix. 950.; of philosophy to ii. l. 286., ix. 564.; of mythology to iv. 593., ix. 519.; of navigation to viii. 168.

<sup>1</sup> Lucan is described to us as a wealthy idler: Juvenal, vii. 79.

“Contentus fama jaceat Lucanus in hortis Marmoreis.”

He was born at Corduba in Spain, but of Roman parents, and neither his father Mella, nor his uncles Seneca and Gallio, betrayed the simplicity of a provincial extraction. The notion of Quintilian that his rhetorical style savoured of Spanish turgidity, and the compliments of Statius to his native Bætis, are more fanciful than sound. See however *Sylv.* ii. 7. 33.:

“Attollat refluos in astra fontes  
Graio nobelior Melete Bætis:  
Bætin, Mantua, provocare noli.”

<sup>2</sup> The purity of the *Pharsalia* is equal to that of the *Æneid*, and the same



professed philosophers spoke with doubt and anxiety, and at best with faint hope, of the prospect of a future state, Lucan faithful to the common sentiment of poetry, and the universal aspirations of unsophisticated nature, expresses at one time the popular belief in its existence, and philosophic conceptions of its character at another.<sup>1</sup>

may be said of the later epics of Silius, Statius, and Valerius Flaccus. Lucan's moral perceptions are more just than Virgil's; bating some exaggerated expressions of vindictiveness, they are a very fair reflection of the teaching of his masters the Stoics. I must censure, however, his tenderness for the scoundrel Domitius, who dying forsooth, "*Venia gaudet caruisse secunda.*"—*Phars.* vii. 604.

<sup>1</sup> The scorn Lucan throws on the Druidical doctrine of transmigration, i. 455., implies no denial of a spiritual immortality. On the other hand, the reality of the future life, as a state of retribution, is strongly set forth in many passages: see particularly vi. 782., vii. 816., and the sublime canonization of Pompeius, ix. l.:

"At non in Pharia manes jacuere favilla,  
Nec cinis exiguus tantam compescuit Umbram:  
Prosiluit busto, semiustaque membra relinquens,  
Degeneremque rogi, sequitur convexa Tonantis. . . .  
Semidei Manes habitant, quos ignea virtus,  
Innoeuos vitæ, patientes ætheris imi  
Fecit, et æternos animam collegit in orbes."

## CHAPTER LV.

THE EMPEROR NERO: HIS FIGURE AND CHARACTER.—THE SENATE: REDUCED IN NUMBERS BY PROSCRIPTION; LOWERED IN ESTIMATION: IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE OLD FAMILIES, BUT GENERAL INCREASE OF WEALTH IN THE UPPER RANKS.—THE COMMONALTY DIVIDED INTO TWO CLASSES.—THE PROVINCIALS: THE PRÆTORIANS: THE LEGIONS.—INDEPENDENCE OF THE PROCONSULS.—ACCOUNT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA.—EXPLOITS OF CORBULO.—NERO VISITS GREECE: HIS PERSONAL DISPLAYS THERE.—DEATH OF CORBULO.—INDIGNATION OF THE ROMANS AT NERO'S SELF-ABASEMENT.—VINDEX CONSPIRES AGAINST HIM.—REVOLT OF GALBA AND VIRGINIUS.—GALBA PROCLAIMED EMPEROR BY HIS SOLDIERS.—NERO'S RETURN TO ROME AND TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.—HIS DESPICABLE PUSILLANIMITY.—HIS LAST HOURS AND DEATH.—(A. D. 66., A. U. 819.—A. D. 68., A. U. 821.)

BENEATH the ostensible records which have been left us of the last three Cæsars, we may seem to detect traces, as it were, now almost obliterated, of another and more legitimate writing. It may not be impossible, I conceive, to reconstruct the true character of Tiberius, by freeing it from the distortions of the glosses with which it has been overlaid. If there remain less distinct traces of the real portraiture of Caius and Claudius, we have discovered nevertheless unquestionable evidence of gross perversions of the truth, which must throw doubt on the genuineness of the lineaments in which they have been commonly presented. With regard to Nero, however, the case, it must be allowed, is different. The invalidation, indeed, of the testimony of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion in the earlier instances renders them justly suspected in this also; the accounts of the two last-named writers especially seem in some respects quite incredible: nevertheless I am constrained to add that no out-

The account of Nero given by our authorities must be accepted as substantially correct.

lines of a truer character are elsewhere discoverable, and with some allowance only for extravagance of colouring, we must accept in the main the verisimilitude of the picture they have left us of this arch-tyrant, the last and the most detestable of the Cæsarean family.

The youth who at the age of seventeen years was called to govern the civilized world, is represented in his busts and medals as handsome in countenance, but, as Suetonius remarks, without grace or winningness of expression.<sup>1</sup> His hair was not the bright auburn of Apollo, the delight of the Romans, to which it was so often likened, but yellowish or sandy: his figure, though of middle stature, was ill-proportioned, the neck was thick and sensual, the stomach prominent, the legs slender. His skin, it is added, was blotched or pimpled; but this, it may be supposed, was the effect of intemperance in his later years; his eyes were dark gray or greenish, and their sight defective, which may account perhaps for the scowl which seems to mark their expression. His health, notwithstanding his excesses, continued good to the end, and it was only from anxious concern for his voice that he wrapped his throat in kerchiefs, like a confirmed valetudinarian.<sup>2</sup> In his dress there was a mixture of slovenliness and finery; in the arrangement of his cherished locks he was exceedingly careful, piling them in tiers above the crown, and letting them fall from thence over the shoulders, a fashion which was reputed not less indecent, or at least effeminate, than the looseness of his cincture, the bareness of his feet, and the lightness of the chamber-robe in which he did not scruple to appear in public.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 51.: "Vultu pulchro magis quam venusto." This distinction between "pulcher" and "venustus" is well supported from the authorities by Dœderlein. Comp. especially Catull. lxxxvi. On the passage in Suetonius he makes the comment: "d. h. er hatte mehr vollkommen und regelmässig Schöne als angenehme Züge, und war also eine herzlose kalte Schönheit zu der sich niemand hingezogen fühlt."—*Synonym.* iii. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. l. c.

<sup>3</sup> Suet. l. c.: "Synthesinam indutus;" explained by the commentators by "vestem cubitoriam" (χιτώνιον ἄνθρον, Dion, lxiii. 13.), the "thalassina ves-



We may trace perhaps to the character of his master, and to the kind of education he was likely to receive from him, the ardent love of admiration, ill-directed as it was, which distinguished the pupil of Seneca. To <sup>Nero's love of admiration.</sup> this constant anxiety to compete with rivals, and triumph over them, however trifling the objects on which it was exercised, may be ascribed the indifference Nero evidently felt to the title of divinity, which in his inordinate vanity he might have been expected to claim.' He wanted to be admired as the first among men, not to be adored as a god. He could not be Apollo, and contend at the same time for the prize of the Pythian games: he could not be Hercules, and carry off the chaplet at Nemea: he could not be Jupiter, and gain the victory at the great contest of Olympia;—distinctions on which his soul was bent from an early period of his career, and which, as we shall see, he lived eventually to achieve. His courtiers might, if they pleased, pronounce his likeness to these or any other divinities; but to make him actually divine was to rob him of the honours he so vehemently affected. The poets might predict his apotheosis after death, and doubtless the verses in which Lucan, at that time his friend and companion, challenged him to choose what godship he would assume in heaven, and where he would fix his throne; imploring him to take his seat in the middle of the universe, lest if he leaned ever so little from the centre the world should be thrown by his august weight from its eter-

tis," as I conceive, of Lucretius. The long loose robe was the garb also of the lyrist: "Statuas suas citharædico habitu," &c. Suet. *Ner.* 25. Eckhel compares Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 645.:

"Necnon Threicius longa cum veste sacerdos  
Obloquitur numeris septem discrimina vocum."

<sup>1</sup> We have seen how the proposal of Anicius Cerialis to erect a temple to Nero was repudiated. Tac. *Ann.* xv. ult. It should be remarked, however, that there are specimens of gold and silver medals, the imperial coinage, in which the head of Nero is encircled with rays. These may be regarded as an emblem of divinity, unless they are meant only to indicate his rivalry with the sun-god Apollo. See Eckhel, vi. 269. The bust of Nero in the Louvre is also radiated. Müller, *Archæol. der Kunst.* 198.

nal balance ;—such verses were doubtless accepted as a fitting tribute to the germ of a divine existence hereafter to blossom into flower.<sup>1</sup> But the ardour with which Nero aspired to distinctions among mortal men was itself a guarantee against his usurping the character of the impassive godhead, which can neither enjoy a triumph nor suffer a disgrace.

Nor again, though described by Tacitus as *lusting after the incredible*, had Nero the same passion as Caius for realizing apparent impossibilities to prove his superhuman power.<sup>2</sup> He was not impelled in a career of marvels by restless and aimless pride. Once removed from the sphere of theatrical shows and contests, he had no higher notion of his position than as enabling him to accumulate, to multiply, or to enlarge the commonest objects of luxury. He never travelled, it is asserted, with less than

His vulgar  
ideas of mag-  
nificence.

<sup>1</sup> Lucan, i. 45. :

“Te, cum statione peraeta  
Astra petes serus, prælati regia cœli  
Accipiet, gaudente polo: seu sceptrâ tenere,  
Seu te flammigeros Phœbi conscendere currus,  
Telluremque nihil mutato Sole timentem  
Igne vago lustrare juvet; tibi numine ab omni  
Cedetur, jurisque tui Natura relinquet  
Quis Deus esse velis, ubi regnum ponere Mundi. . . .  
Ætheris immensi partem si presseris unam  
Sentiet axis onus; librati pondera cœli  
Orbe tene medio.”

In the fragment ascribed to the poet Turnus, the Muses are accused of prostituting themselves to Nero, and paying him divine honours:

“Quis genus ab Jove summo,  
Asse merent vili, ac sancto se corpore fœdant . . .  
Proh! Furias et monstra colunt . . . et quicquid Olympi est  
Transcripsere Erebo. Jamque impia ponere templa  
Sacrilegasque audent aras, cœloque repulsos  
Quondam Terrigenas superis imponere regnis  
Qua licet; et stolido verbis illuditur orbi.”

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus calls him “incredibilium cupitot,” *Ann.* xv. 42., specially with reference to his project of a canal from Avernus to Ostia. He seems greatly to exaggerate the difficulties of the undertaking; perhaps his best comment upon it is: “nec satis causæ.”

a thousand carriages in his train. His banquets were those of the noble debauchees of the day on a still vaster scale of expense: in the height of his extravagance, he would equip his actors with masks or wands covered with genuine pearls; he would stake four hundred thousand sesterces on a single cast of the dice; he bathed in unguents, and stimulated his friends to expend four millions on the perfumes alone of a single supper.<sup>1</sup> His presents to favourites were sums of money so many times greater than had ever been given to favourites before;<sup>2</sup> his buildings were colonnades longer, halls wider, towers higher than had been raised by his predecessors. His projected canal from Puteoli to Rome would only have been the longest of canals; the attempt he latterly made to cut through the isthmus of Corinth was only a repetition of previous attempts, neither better planned, nor more steadfastly persevered in. In his schemes there was nothing new or original. Nero was devoid of the imagination which throws an air of wild grandeur over the character of Caius. The notion that he burnt Rome on purpose to have an opportunity of rebuilding it more magnificently would have been more applicable, as it seems to me, to his predecessor than to him. But within the paltry sphere of his degraded taste he claimed to be pre-eminent. As a mime or player he was not satisfied with any single class of parts, or any one department of exhibition. After rivalling Apollo in song and the Sun in charioteering, he aspired to display the courage and vigour of Hercules, and a lion was duly prepared, drugged or fed to stupor, to be strangled in his arms, or brained with a stroke of his club.<sup>3</sup> He acted, he sang, he played, he danced. He insisted on representing men and heroes, gods

His taste for personal display unrestrained by a sense of decency.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 27.; Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xxxvii. 6.; Oros. vii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Nero, it is said, threw in his lifetime as much as 2200 millions of sesterces (17,600,000*l.*) to his courtiers and freedmen. Tac. *Hist.* i. 20. He covered the theatre of Pompeius with gilding in one day, to exhibit it to his royal visitor Tiridates. Plin. *H. N.* xxxiii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 53.



and even goddesses. To affect the woman indeed, in dress, voice, and gesture, was a transformation in which he took a childish pleasure, restrained by no sense of dignity or decency. He adopted his superstitions, as well as his garb and habits, from Syria, from his Parthian and Armenian guests, or from the diviners and necromancers of the credulous East. To the art of magic he devoted wealth, energy, natural abilities, in short, all his resources; but Nature, says Pliny, was too strong for him.<sup>1</sup> His failure to divine the future, or raise the spirits of the dead, was noted by the wise as a signal demonstration of the futility of magical pretensions. For none of the accustomed divinities of Rome did he evince any respect, nor for places consecrated by the national religion; but he revered the Syrian Astarte, till in a fit of vexation he renounced her protection, and insulted her image. At last his sole object of veneration was a little figure of a girl, which he always wore as a talisman about him, and affected to learn from it the secrets of futurity.<sup>2</sup>

Such were the miserable interests of this infatuated creature, the victim of licentious indulgence, a child prematurely stunted both in mind and body, surrounded on the throne not by generals and statesmen, but by troops of slaves or freedmen, by players and dancers lost to all sense of decency themselves, and seeking only their advancement at the expense of their master and of mankind; surrendered by loose women to still more despicable minions, and ruled by the

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 34.: "Quin et facto per Magos sacro evocare manes et exorare tentavit." Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xxx. 5.: "Imperare Dis concupivit. . . . ad hæc non opes ei defuere, non vires, non discentis ingenium, aliaque, non patiente mundo. Immensum, et indubitatum exemplum est falsæ artis quam dereliquit Nero."

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 56.: "Religionum usquequaque contemptor, præter unius Dææ Syriæ. Hanc mox ita sprexit, ut urina contaminaret. . . . icunculam puellam colere perseveravit." Tacitus relates, *Ann.* xiv. 22., how Nero bathed from mere caprice in the spring of the Aqua Marcia, which was declared sacred, doubtless to protect from impurities the water to be drunk at Rome. A sickness which followed was ascribed to the anger of the Nymph.

most cruel and profligate of ministers. Helius and Tigellinus, Doryphorus and Sporus, are among the most hateful names of the imperial history; into the abominations of their career it would be pollution merely to look. No wonder that, when encircled by so loathsome a crew, he saw the proud citizens prostrate at his feet, he could exclaim that no prince before him had known the extent of his power.<sup>1</sup>

But though at their patron's command statues and arches might rise in honour of these infamous companions, it may be said for the credit of the people, that they received much less of lip-worship than their predecessors, Sejanus, Pallas, and Narcissus. There seems indeed to have risen, at least in the later years of this principate, a marked separation between the court and the nobility: the senators shrank from the presence of a man who so openly degraded his name and lineage; they fled the contact of his dissolute associates; they entered into widespread conspiracies against him, to which they had never been provoked by the tyranny of his predecessors; and they had the merit of incurring his petulant displeasure, with many a threat to extinguish their order altogether, and give the provinces to his knights and freedmen. *I hate you, Cæsar*, exclaimed the most refined of his flatterers, *because you are a senator*.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly this emperor, notwithstanding the pomp and splendour of his shows and public appearances, seems to have been left for the most part to the mercenary attendance of his personal favourites, protected only by a troop of spies and informers, and the vilest portion of the pampered populace, from the general detestation of respectable citizens.<sup>3</sup>

Nero's unworthy favourites despised and shunned by the nobles.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 37. "Elatus, inflatusque . . . negavit quemquam principum scisse quid sibi lieeret."

<sup>2</sup> Vatinius in Dion, lxiii. 15.: *μισῶ σε, Καῖσαρ, ὅτι συγκλητικὸς εἶ*. Comp. Suet. *Ner.* 37.

<sup>3</sup> Strange stories are told of the efforts Nero made to retain the better portion of the citizens as spectators of his entertainments, which they found, it is said, insufferably tedious. See Dion, l. c. ὥστε τινὰς . . . προσποιεῖσθαι τε

The cruelties of Nero's later years were the more fearful perhaps from their apparent caprice. He had no politic object, such as may be ascribed to Tiberius: of policy indeed he was incapable. Except that his murders were commonly prompted by need or fear, and therefore fell oftenest on the rich and powerful, it can hardly be said that one class suffered from them more terribly than another. His family, his friends, the senators, the knights, philosophers, and Christians, Romans and provincials, were all decimated by them. The natural tenderness of his timid and pliant conscience once seared by crime, there remained no moral strength to resist any evil suggestion: his conduct was that of mere selfish instinct, without an emotion of pity or compunction. Even the terrors of guilt touched him lightly and passed away rapidly.

Undoubtedly, however, the senate furnished the longest list of victims to the tyrant's barbarity. The greatest and noblest were the most exposed to the prince's evil eye, which lighted upon them equally at public ceremonials and private receptions, and marked them for immolation at every fresh burst of ill-humour. The proscriptions to which this body was subjected under the four Claudian Cæsars reduced its numbers considerably, more indeed, it may be imagined, than was replaced by the ordinary sources of replenishment. Claudius, among his other reforms, sought to restore the balance by a special measure, and such was probably the object of his revision of the senate, the last of the kind we read of; but the decline must have been accelerated under Nero, without check or counteraction. Nero, reckless equally of the past and future, felt no anxiety to maintain the numbers of that historic assembly: and the various causes, besides the emperor's tyranny, which were always at work to extinguish the oldest families, must have

His cruelties  
capricious, not  
politic.

Proscriptions  
of the senate.

Its numbers re-  
duced under the  
tyranny of the  
Claudian Cæ-  
sars.

ἐκθυήσκειν, καὶ νεκρῶν δίκην ἐκ τῶν θέατρων ἐκφέρεισθαι. But we may hope there was some moral indignation in their disgust.



acted with terrible force on the effete branches of the ancient aristocracy. But if its numbers were reduced, no less were its employments also. Under the lax discipline of Nero and Tigellinus appointments to office abroad would be the prize of interest and favour, guided neither by routine nor by discretion: at home the boards and commissions established by Augustus would fall into disuse. Pensions and sinecures, though such corruptions are not known to us at Rome by name, would doubtless abound, but of real business there would be less and less. Intrigue and peculation would flourish in a soil protected from the air of public opinion, and the strong hand of central control. The passive endurance which marked the conduct of the senate under the imperial persecutions seems to bespeak a consciousness of its own guilt towards the state, and it compounded for its monopoly of unquestioned abuses by bowing to the yoke of a jealous and domineering master. We discover in Seneca no reliance on the senate. He never speaks of it as a living guardian of the virtues of Roman society. And yet, notwithstanding this abandonment of its high prerogative, it still exercised a moral power. Its mere title could awaken associations which thrilled from pulse to pulse. It was still regarded by the men of ancient name and blood as the true head or heart of the empire, rather than the upstart Claudius or Domitius, who might wear the purple and wield the sword. To the men of words and phrases the emperor was still an accident,—the senate was an eternal fact,—at a time when rhetoric might make revolutions, though it could not regenerate society. To them it was still the symbol of liberty, at a time when liberty and Cæsar were regarded as two gladiators sword in hand, pitted against each other in mortal combat.<sup>1</sup> This venerable image of its ancient majesty was preserved to it by the proscriptions themselves by which it

Its estimation  
lowered in the  
eye of the citi-  
zens.

<sup>1</sup> Lucan, vii. 694.:

“Non jam Pompeii nomen populare per orbem,  
Nec studium belli; sed par quod semper habemus  
Libertas et Cæsar erunt.”

suffered; for as often as a murdered Scribonius or Pompeius was replaced in the chairs of office by a Rubellius, a Lollius, or a Vitellius, the principle of its vitality was in fact invigorated by the infusion of new plebeian blood.<sup>1</sup>

As fast indeed as the tyrant's exigencies required the confiscation of the great estates of nobles, and the overthrow of great families, his caprice and favour were elevating new men from the inferior orders to succeed to their distinctions, and to rival them in their vast possessions. Nero never kept his money. All he robbed, all he extorted, was squandered as abruptly as it was acquired, and shrewd Roman money-makers were always waiting upon his necessities, and sweeping the properties of his victims into their stores for a small part of their value in specie. Of the vast sums amassed by the freedmen of Claudius and his successors some records have been preserved to us; but the freedmen were a class peculiarly obnoxious to remark, and it is probable that knights and senators were at the same time, and by similar compliances, raising fortunes not less enormous, who have escaped the designating finger of history. Though the grinding processes to which the colossal properties of the nobles were subjected must on the whole have broken down the average amount of their revenues far below the rate at which it figured under the republic and the first Cæsars, we must not suppose that the current set all in one direction, or that the age of Claudius and Nero was not also a period of great private accumulations. The wealth of individuals and of the upper ranks at Rome generally reached perhaps its greatest height at this culminating epoch.

Impoverishment of the old families.

But general increase of wealth in the upper classes.

Descending, however, from the high places of the Roman

<sup>1</sup> Champagny gives a list of the new consular families of the period of the Cæsars: "the Ælia, Annæa, Arruntia, Asinia, Cocceia, Hateria, Junia, Lollia, Memmia, Octavia, Plautia, Pomponia, Poppæa, Rubellia, Salvia, Silia, Vipsania, Vitellia, Volusia. From henceforth we lose sight of many famous names of the republic; such as the Atilia, Fulvia, Horatia, Hortensia, Hostilia, Livia, Lucretia, Papiria, Porcia, Postumia, Veturia."

world, we find beneath them a commonalty suffering also a social revolution, undergoing a rapid transition, and presenting the elements of two rival classes, or even hostile camps, in the bosom of the city.

The commonalty divided into two classes.

The clients and retainers of the old nobility, whether freed or free born, still formed the pith and marrow of the commonwealth: still lean-

1. The clients of the old nobility.

ing their humble tenements against the great lords' mansions, still respecting them as their patrons and advisers, still attending their levees, and waiting for the daily compliment of the *sportula* at their doors, they regarded them as the real chiefs of the state, and held them equals of Cæsar himself. The death or exile of their august protector might strike them with surprise and indignation; but when they looked around and counted their numbers, they felt their own insignificance, and quailed beneath the blow in silence. They saw that there was growing up beside them a vast class of patronless proletaries, the scum of the streets and lanes, slaves, freed-

2. The patronless proletaries: the lazzaroni of ancient Rome.

men, foreigners, men of base trades and infamous employments, or of ruined fortunes, who, having none but Cæsar himself to depend on, through the weight of their numbers in his scale, and earned his dolés and entertainments by lavish caresses, and deeds corresponding to their promises.<sup>1</sup> These have been called the lazzaroni of ancient Rome: in idleness, indeed, and mendicancy they deserve the title; but they were the paupers of a world-wide empire, and the crumbs on which they fed fell from the tables of kings and princes. The wealth of millions of subjects was lavished on these mendicant masters. For days together, on the oft-recurring occasion of an imperial festival, valuables of all kinds were thrown pell-mell among them, rare and costly birds were lavished upon them by thousands, provisions of every

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 4. (a precious passage, as Champagny justly terms it, in which the historian marks this distinction of classes in the populace): "Pars populi integra et magnis domibus annexa, clientes libertique damnatorum et exsulum: . . . plebs sordida et circo ac theatris sueta, simul deterrimi servorum, aut qui adesis bonis per dedecus Neronis alebantur."



kind, costly robes, gold and silver, pearls and jewels, pictures, slaves, and horses, and even tamed wild beasts: at last, in the progress of this wild profusion, ships, houses, and estates were bestowed by lottery on these waiters upon Cæsar's providence.<sup>1</sup> This extravagance was retained without relaxation throughout Nero's reign: had he paused in it for a moment the days of his power would have been few. The rumour that he was about to quit Rome for the East caused murmurs of discontent, and forced him to consult the gods, and pretend to be deterred by signs of their displeasure from carrying his design into effect.<sup>2</sup> When at last, as we shall see, he actually visited Greece, he left behind him a confidential minister, to keep the stream of his liberality flowing, at whatever cost and by whatever measures of spoliation. Absent or present, he flung to these pampered supporters a portion of every confiscated fortune; the emperor and his people hunted together, and the division of the prey was made apparently to the satisfaction of both equally. Capricious as were the blows he dealt around him, this class alone he took care never to offend, and even the charge of firing the city fell lightly on the ears of the almost houseless multitude, whose losses at least had been fully compensated by plunder. The clients of the condemned nobles were kept effectually in check by this hungry crowd, yelling over every carcass with the prospect of a feast. Nero, in the height of his tyranny and alarm, had no need to increase the number of his prætorians: the lazzaroni of Rome were a body-guard surrounding him in every public place, and watching the entrances and exits at his palace gates.

Such were the chief distinctions of class at this period among the Roman people, the so-called lords of mankind, and beyond them lay the great world of provincials, their subjects. But if these were subjects in name, they were now become in fact the

The provin-  
cials, or sub-  
jects of Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 11.; Dion, lxi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 36.: "Deseruit inceptum. . . . Hæc atque talia plebi volentia fuere voluptatum cupidine," &c.

true Roman people; they alone retained real freedom of action within the limits of the empire; they were allowed to labour, and they enjoyed the bulk at least of the fruits of industry; they rarely saw the hateful presence of the emperor, and knew only by report the loathsome character of his courtiers and their orgies. And if sometimes the thunderbolt might fall among them, it struck only the highest eminences; the multitude was safe as it was innocent. The extortion of the proconsul in the province was not to be compared in wantonness or severity with the reckless pillage of the emperor in the capital, nearer home. The petulance of a proconsul's wife was hardly tolerated abroad, while at home the prince's worst atrocities were stimulated by female cupidity. The taxation of the subject, if heavier in some respects than that of the citizen, was at least tolerably regular: the extraordinary demands which Nero made towards the rebuilding of Rome were an exception to the routine of fiscal imposts. But, above all, the provincials had changed place with their masters in being now the armed force of the empire. The citizen had almost ceased to wield the sword. Even the prætorians were recruited from Italy, not from Rome herself; and among them thousands were doubtless foreign-born, the offscourings of the provinces, who had thrown themselves on the shores of Italy to seek their fortunes in a sphere abandoned by the indolence of their masters. The prætorian, like the proletary of the city, was highly cherished by the emperor. He had his rights and privileges which raised him above every other military conscript. While the legionary served at ten asses a day for thirty or forty years exposed to the risk of war, fatigue, and climate, nor regained his liberty and safety till age had blanched his hair and stiffened his limbs, the prætorian lived quietly at Rome under the lax discipline of a stative camp; he enjoyed double pay, and claimed dismissal after sixteen years' service. He had his regular dole of corn, his occasional largess, his extraordinary donative whenever an opportunity had occurred to

The prætorians  
recruited in  
Italy.

prove his fidelity. Tiberius, on the fall of Sejanus, had given him 1000 ases; Claudius had paid for the purple with a sum of 150 millions of sesterces; Nero had followed these examples, and established them as the rule of the succession: on the overthrow of Piso's conspiracy he had requited his prætorians with 2000 sesterces apiece.<sup>1</sup> Thus caressed, the favoured cohorts of the guard became the firmest support of the prince their creature, and under the sway of military traditions, from which even they were not exempt, regarded their oath of allegiance with strict fidelity. This fidelity, indeed, they considered due to the emperor himself rather than to the senate and people, whom they equally despised: they were satisfied with the power of making the Cæsars, and as yet were far from conceiving in their minds the idea of unmaking them again.

But far different was the case with the legions in the provinces. The legionary was still less Roman than the prætorian. If to a great extent the recruits for the frontier camps were still levied from the class which possessed the nominal franchise of the city, yet these citizens were themselves, for the most part, new-enfranchised provincials: they had received Latin or Roman rights as a boon from the emperor, or perhaps purchased them for the sake of their fiscal immunities. Romans in blood or even Italians the legionaries no longer were. They were supported by ample levies of auxiliaries, avowedly of foreign extraction, generally transferred from their homes to a camp at a far distant station; Silures and Brigantes to the Danube; Tungri and Suevi to the borders of Wales; Iberians to the Euphrates, Numidians to the Rhine. Amidst the clang of dissonant languages that resounded through the camp the Latin was the least heard and understood.<sup>2</sup> Yet the word of

The legions recruited in the provinces.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Tib.* 36., *Claud.* 10., *Ner.* 10.; Tac. *Ann.* xv. 72.

<sup>2</sup> The military inscriptions, such as those on the Roman walls in the north of Britain, from which chiefly these facts are elicited, are generally of a later date than that we are now considering. To this subject I shall have occasion to revert hereafter.



command was still Roman, and the chief officers were Romans also: the affections of this soldiery, long estranged from the emperor and the senate, were attached to the tribune and the legatus: and the murmurs of the nobles at home, which moved the sympathy of their kinsmen on the frontier, met a deep response in the devotion of these sons of the eagles to their accustomed leaders. The vast distance of the great camps of the empire from one another, and the frequent change of their officers, together with the motives of jealousy which the emperors nourished between them, helped to prevent these legions from joining in a common cause when disaffection menaced an outbreak in any particular quarter.<sup>1</sup> They made some partial attempts to supplant the prætorians by carrying one of their own chiefs to power; but every endeavour of the kind had been hitherto baffled by the want of concert among them.

While, however, the emperor's power was thus firmly rooted in the capital, the blow which was at last to overwhelm him was slowly preparing in the provinces. The policy of the first Cæsars, which, in order to re-  
Independent position of the proconsuls.
 press popular excitement at the seat of government, had renounced the maxim of the free state, that office should be held only for a limited term, had raised, in fact, a number of vice-Cæsars to the dependent thrones of the provincial governments. On the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euphrates, and on a smaller scale at the centre of each proconsular jurisdiction, a Roman senator, generally of high birth and hereditary wealth, held the place of the imperator at the head of the armies, and of the whole civil and financial establishment. In this arduous position his hands were at least unfettered. He quitted Rome attended by friends of his own choosing; neither prince nor senate interfered with his appointments. No council at his seat of government, under pretence of assisting, had the power of controlling him. Throughout the extent of his province the word of the pro-

<sup>1</sup> Thus Tacitus remarks, *Hist.* i. 9.: "Longis spatiis discreti exercitus, quod saluberrimum est ad continendam fidem."

consul was law. The prætor's edict did not run beyond Rome and Italy. If in ordinary transactions between Romans the body of Roman law was held nominally in force, the master of the sword, so far removed from all supervision, was actually paramount, and the judicial officers, under his appointment and control, were simply interpreters of his will. Without a senate, without a public opinion, with hardly a tradition of government to check him, the ruler of Gaul and Syria was really more an emperor than the emperor himself. Dismissing from his mind, as much as possible, the thought of Cæsar's wrath, as of a capricious Nemesis which might at any moment be raised against him, he enjoyed the favours of fortune to the full, and compensated himself for the risks of his position by its substantial advantages.

It would be idle to suppose that the independence of the great captains in the provinces would be exercised without a large amount of deliberate or wanton tyranny.

Their government less tyrannical than that of the emperors at Rome.

But the murmurs of the provincials have been suppressed, their complaints have been buried in oblivion. That from time to time a vicious proconsul was still accused by his subjects and condemned by an equitable emperor, we learn from a few incidental notices: more than once a corner of the veil is raised, and we read, as in Palestine especially, of their violence and cruelty: nevertheless, on the whole, the balance of testimony seems to show that the provinces were governed more mildly than could have been anticipated, more mildly than the capital itself. The reason seems to be this, that while the excesses of the emperors at Rome were generally caused by personal fear, and often designed to stifle the first murmurs of discontent, in the provinces the governors had no such enemies to apprehend, while no severity towards their dependents could protect them against their only enemy, the emperor himself. The proconsuls, moreover, were always men of high character and standing, experienced in government, trained by discipline and accustomed to self-control; they were not mere striplings elevated by court favour, without preparation for

their arduous employment, without habits either of obedience or command. The history of the world presents us, perhaps, with no such succession of able captains and administrators, as the long series of the governors of Syria or Macedonia: we can only regret that our acquaintance with them is so imperfect, that the lines of their policy are often to be traced for the most part by conjecture and inference. Above all, however, it may be remarked that loyalty to the commonwealth was still the leading idea in the mind of the proconsul: he regarded himself strictly as the instrument of her behests; he acted with a single eye to her interest, barring only a certain amount of licensed profit for himself; while, as the sworn lieutenant of the emperor at home, he considered the commonwealth as centred in the imperial person.

By careful examination of the authorities, it has been found possible to make a complete list of the governors of the great province of Syria, the importance of which in Roman history has been so often indicated.<sup>1</sup> After the death of Germanicus in 772, his officers, while awaiting the pleasure of Tiberius, desired Sentius Saturninus to act as legatus of the emperor. This of

List of the proconsuls of Syria.

<sup>1</sup> See the elaborate and interesting dissertation of Aug. Zumpt (*Comm. Epigraph.* ii. 73-150.). I give here his list of proconsuls, with their dates:—

	B. C.	A. U.		A. D.	A. U.
Q. Didius - - -	30	724	P. Sulpicius Quirinius -	6	759
M. Messala Corvinus -	29	725	Q. Cæcilius Silanus -	11	764
M. Tullius Cicero -	28	726	Cn. Calpurnius Piso -	17	770
A. Terentius Murena -	28	726	L. Ælius Lamia -	21	774
C. Sentius Saturninus -	26	728	L. Pomponius Flaccus -	32	785
M. Agrippa - - -	23	731	L. Vitellius - - -	35	788
M. Titius - - -	13	741	P. Petronius - - -	39	792
C. Sentius Saturninus -	9	745	C. Vibius Marsus - -	42	795
P. Quintilius Varus -	6	748	C. Cassius Longinus -	45	798
P. Sulpicius Quirinius -	4	750	C. Ummidius Quadratus -	50	803
M. Lollius - - -	1	753	Domitius Corbulo - -	61	814
	A. D.		C. Cestius Gallus - -	63	816
C. Marcius Censorinus -	3	756	C. Licinius Mucianus -	66	819
L. Volusius Saturninus -	4	757			



course did not constitute an appointment to the proconsulship which Piso had vacated, nor do we hear that Tiberius regarded it as a recommendation. But he was unwilling perhaps to offend a powerful soldiery by openly repudiating their choice, or he shrank from conferring upon any one the full powers of the Syrian prefecture. Accordingly the next governor, Ælius Lamia, seems to have been retained at home, while the province was administered for several years by the chiefs of the four legions quartered within it. Lamia was succeeded by Pomponius Flaccus, who once more united the province under a single ruler, and died in the year 786. Upon this vacancy the carelessness, or more probably the jealousy, of the emperor allowed the province to remain for two years without a superior governor. Tiberius pretended indeed that no senator of sufficient authority would quit the dissipations of the capital for the vice-regal splendours of the East.<sup>1</sup> The excuse was too transparent to impose on any one. But the urgency of affairs on the oft-disturbed frontier compelled him at last to supply the vacancy, and L. Vitellius, to whom Syria was assigned in 788, seems to have been one of the ablest as well as the noblest of the senatorial order. This proconsul continued to govern through the earlier years of Caius, till he gave offence by hesitating to enforce the worship of the emperor upon the Jews. Certainly Vitellius, the worshipper himself of Caius, and the devoted flatterer of Messalina, had no scruples of pride or religion: but, good soldier and administrator as he was, he shrank from a wanton insult which would infallibly lead to a revolt.<sup>2</sup> Petronius, who succeeded him, allowed the affair to linger under various excuses, and the last letter, requiring him to proceed in its execution without further delay, reached him fortunately at the same moment with the news of the emperor's death. Petronius was apparently an old familiar of Claudius, and was permitted to retain the government for some years under

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* vi. 27. ; Zumpt, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus says of him, vi. 32. : "Regendis provinciis prisca virtute egisse." For his recall by Caius, see Joseph. *Antiq.* xviii. 8. 2. A. U. 793.

the new Cæsar.<sup>1</sup> He was followed by Vibius Marsus, one of the few friends of Germanicus who had preserved, after his patron's death, the favour of Tiberius, and had been suffered to pass three years in the government of Africa.<sup>2</sup> The next in succession, C. Cassius Longinus, is a splendid example of the character and position which were held to qualify for this exalted sovereignty. This man was descended from the family of the Liberator, who was hardly less distinguished for his victories over the Parthians than for his defence of Roman freedom. He had obtained the consulship under Tiberius, but his renown as the chief of a sect among the jurists of his age recommended him, under Claudius, to the still higher honours of the proconsulate. For five years Syria was ruled by Cassius: after his retirement from the province he lost his sight, but his reputation sufficed of itself to excite the jealousy of Nero, who banished him to Sardinia in the year 818.<sup>3</sup> From 803 to 814 the government was held by Ummidius Quadratus, the first of the series of Syrian proconsuls that died in office. He owed his long tenure to the fact that Anteius, designed by Nero for his successor, was an object of suspicion at court as a friend of Agrippina.<sup>4</sup>

During the last two proconsulates the prefecture of Syria had acquired its greatest extension. On the death of Herod Agrippa in 797, his kingdom of Judea had been definitively annexed to the empire, and was subjected, as once before, to an imperial procurator, who, while he derived his fiscal and civil authority directly from the emperor, and acted in a manner as his viceroy, was nevertheless placed under the military control of the proconsul.<sup>5</sup>

Annexation of  
Judea to the  
province of  
Syria.

<sup>1</sup> This Petronius, called Publius by Josephus and Philo, seems to be the same described by Seneca in his satire on the death of Claudius, as "vetus convictor ejus," and "homo Claudiana lingua disertus." He must have held the government of Syria till 742. Zumpt, p. 136., from Eckhel, iii. 280.

<sup>2</sup> Eckhel, iv. 147., in Zumpt, l. c.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 7.: Suet. *Ner.* 37. He was eventually recalled from exile by Vespasian: Pompon. *de Orig. Juris.* in *Dig.* i. 2. 47.

<sup>4</sup> Zumpt on Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 22., xvi. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* xii. 60.: "Sæpius audita vox principis (Claudii), parem vim

Under court protection some of the Judean procurators, especially the infamous Felix, the brother of Pallas, and his partner in the favour of Claudius, had indulged in every excess, till the spirit of revolt already roused by the threats of Caius broke out in fierce but desultory acts of violence. These indeed had been repressed with the sternness of Rome, not unmingled with some features of barbarity peculiar to the East.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the government had resented the tyranny of its officers, which had caused this dangerous insubordination, and Quadratus had himself condemned from his tribunal the indiscretion of the procurator Cumanus.<sup>2</sup> While, however, the authority of the Syrian proconsul was thus extended over the region of Palestine in the south, a portion of his northern dependencies was taken from him, and erected for a time into a separate prefecture. In the year 808 the brave Domitius Corbulo, recalled from his German command, was deputed to maintain the majesty of the empire in the face of the Parthians, and defend Armenia from the intrigues or violence with which they continued to menace it. The forces of Rome in the East were now divided between Quadratus and Corbulo. To the proconsul of Syria were left two legions with their auxiliaries, to the new commander were assigned the other two, while the frontier tributaries were ordered to serve in either camp, as the policy of the empire should require.<sup>3</sup> While such was the distribution of the

*rerum habendam a procuratoribus suis judicatarum ac si ipse statuisset.*" The powers of the procurator were thus extended from matters of revenue to justice and administration. He was checked, however, by the presence of a legatus with an armed force, representing the proconsul, in his district. The general character of the Judean procurators is described from a single instance by Tacitus, *Hist.* v. 9.: "Claudius, defunctis regibus aut ad modicum redactis, Judæam provinciam equitibus Rom. aut libertis permisit, e quibus Antonius Felix per omnem sævitiam ac libidinem jus regum servili ingenio exercuit."

<sup>1</sup> The horrid death by crucifixion, which in the West was the punishment of slaves only, was inflicted without scruple on the rebellious Jews.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. *Antiq. Jud.* xx. 6. 3.; Tac. *Ann.* xii. 54., from which passage it appears that the proconsul of Syria was supreme over the imperial procurator in Judea.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 8.: "Domitium Corbulonem retinendæ Armeniæ præpo-



troops, the territory itself was divided by the line of the Taurus: Cappadocia, together with Galatia, was intrusted to Corbulo, and constituted a separate province. Campaigns of Corbulo. Here he raised the levies he required to replace the lazy veterans who had vitiated the Syrian legions; and here, having further strengthened himself from the German camps, this stern reviver of discipline prepared his men, amidst the rocks and snows, to penetrate the fastnesses of Armenia, and dislodge the Parthians from the gorges of Ararat and Elbrouz.<sup>1</sup> Tiridates, the Parthian pretender to the throne of Armenia, in vain opposed him with arms and treachery. The Romans advanced to the walls of Artaxata, which they stormed and burnt; an exploit, the glory of which was usurped by Nero himself, the senate voting supplications in his honour, and consecrating day after day to the celebration of his victory, till Cassius ventured to demand a limit to such ruinous profusion.<sup>2</sup> The war however was still prolonged through a second and a A. D. 58.  
A. U. 811. third campaign: the Hyrcanians on the banks of the Caspian and Aral,—so far-reaching was the machinery put in motion by Corbulo,—were encouraged to divert the Parthians from assisting Tiridates; and communications were held with them by the route of the Red Sea and the deserts of Beloochistan. At last the Armenian Tigranes, long retained in custody at Rome, was placed by the proconsul on the throne of his ancestors.<sup>3</sup> Some portions of his patrimony, however, were now attached to the sovereignties of Pontus and Cappadocia; a Roman force was left in garrison at Tigranocerta,

suerat . . . Copiæ Oriantis ita dividuntur . . . Socii reges, prout bello conduceret, parere jussi: sed studia eorum in Corbulonem promptiora erant."

<sup>1</sup> The rigours of winter in this elevated and inclement region, the land of Kars and Erzeroum, which have acquired such notoriety in our own day, are painted with terrible force by Tacitus. *Ann.* xiii. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiii. 41.: "C. Cassius . . . disscruit . . . oportere dividi sacros et negotiosos dies, queis divina colerent et humana non impedirent."

Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 25, 26.: "Pars Armeniæ, ut cuique finitima, Pharasmania Polemonique, et Aristobulo atque Antiocho, parere jussæ."

to support his precarious power; and on the death of Quadratus, Corbulo, having achieved the most brilliant successes in the East of any Roman since Pompeius, claimed the whole province of Syria, and the entire administration of affairs on the Parthian frontier, as his legitimate reward.<sup>1</sup>

The union of these wide regions once more under a single ruler, so contrary, as it would appear, to the emperor's natural policy, was extorted perhaps from the fears of Nero, not indeed by actual threats, but by the formidable attitude of his general. An emperor, still a youth, who had seen no service himself, and had only caught at the shadows of military renown cast on him by his lieutenants, may have felt misgivings at the greatness of the real chiefs of his legions. It was from this jealousy, perhaps, that the career of conquest in Britain was so suddenly checked after the victory of Suetonius. The position indeed of Corbulo, the successor of Agrippa and Germanicus, might seem beyond the emperor's reach. It could only be balanced by creating similar positions in other quarters, and the empire was, in fact, at this moment virtually divided among three or four great commanders, any one of whom was leader of more numerous forces than could be mustered to oppose him at the seat of government. Nero was well aware of his danger; but he had not the courage to insist, on this occasion, on the division of Syria into two prefectures. He took, as we shall see, a baser precaution, and already perhaps contemplated the assassination of the lieutenant whom he dared not control. It was from Corbulo himself that the proposal came for at least a temporary division. That gallant general, a man of antique devotion to military principles, had no views of personal aggrandisement. When the Parthians, again collecting their forces, made a simultaneous attack on both Armenia and Syria, Corbulo declared that the double war required the presence of two chiefs of equal authority. He

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xiv. 26.: "Corbulo in Syrian abcessit, morte Ummidii legati vacuum et sibi permissam."

desired that the province beyond the Taurus should again be made a separate government.<sup>1</sup> Assuming in person the defence of the Syrian frontier with three legions, he transferred Cappadocia and Galatia, with an equal force, to Cæsennius Pætus, who repaid his generosity by reflecting on the presumed slowness of his operations.<sup>2</sup> But Pætus was as incapable as he was vain. Having advanced into Armenia, he was shut up in one of its cities with two legions, by a superior force, constrained to implore aid from Corbulo, and at last, when the distance and difficulty of the way precluded the possibility of succour, to capitulate ignominiously. Vologesus, king of Parthia, refrained from proceeding to extremities, and treating the humbled foe as his ancestor had treated Crassus.<sup>3</sup> He pretended to desire only a fair arrangement of the points in dispute between the rival empires; and Pætus, having promised that pending this settlement the legions should be withdrawn from Armenia, was suffered, though not without previous indignities, to march out of his captured stronghold, and retire in haste within the frontiers.<sup>4</sup> Arrived there, Corbulo treated him with scornful forbearance; but the emperor recalled him from his post, and the combined forces of the province were once more entrusted to the only man capable of retrieving the disaster.<sup>5</sup> Corbulo penetrated

A. D. 62.  
A. U. 815.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 3. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 6.: "Pætus . . . . despiciēbat gesta, nihil cædis aut prædæ . . . . dictitans." But Tacitus himself had said of Corbulo, "bellum habere quam gerere malebat."

<sup>3</sup> A terrible rumour reached Rome that the legions had been made to pass under the yoke. Tac. *Ann.* xv. 15. Suetonius speaks of it as a fact, I have no doubt erroneously. *Ner.* 39.

<sup>4</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 16-18. The triumphal arch, already decreed during the progress of these events to Nero, was completed and dedicated in the face of this military disaster.

<sup>5</sup> The civil command in Syria was now committed to Cincius or Cestius Gallus (Zumpt, p. 141.), but the combined forces of the Eastern provinces were placed under Corbulo, and he received authority, like that given to Pompeius by the Gabinian law, over all officers, civil and military, throughout the East. Thus we find that he summoned to his standard cohorts from Illyricum and Egypt. Tac. *Ann.* xv. 25, 26.



into the heart of Armenia by the road which Lucullus had formerly opened; but the enemy declined to encounter him. Even on the spot of his ally's recent triumphs, Tiridates bowed to the demands of the proconsul, and consented to lay his diadem at the feet of the emperor's image, and go to Rome to receive it back from his hand.<sup>1</sup> The claims of the puppet Tigranes were eventually set aside, and while Tiridates did homage for his kingdom to Nero, he was suffered to place himself really under the protection of Vologesus.

In the year 816 (A. D. 63), the period of these transactions, Nero, we are told, was preparing to visit the East in person.

Probable object  
of Nero's pro-  
posed visit to  
the East.

A. D. 63.  
A. U. 816.

Some indeed asserted that his object was only to behold the wonders of Egypt;<sup>2</sup> and the interest of the citizens was just then directed towards that mysterious region by the discoveries of an exploring party, which had recently ascended the Nile 900 miles above Syene.<sup>3</sup> Others believed that he had no intention of proceeding beyond Greece; but it seems probable that his views were really more extensive, and that he contemplated throwing himself into the quarters of the Syrian legions, and checking by his presence the ambition of the proconsul, perhaps seizing an opportunity to overthrow him. But, whatever Nero's project may have been, it was frustrated as we have seen, by the occurrence of the fire at Rome. The affairs of the next three years have been already

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 29, 30.: "At nunc versos casus: iturum Tiridatem ostentui gentibus, quanto minus quam captivum!"

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xv. 36.: "Omissa in præsens Achaia, . . . . provincias Orientis, maxime Ægyptum, secretis imaginationibus agitans."

<sup>3</sup> For a brief notice of this interesting expedition, see Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* vi. 35., also Seneca, *Nat. Quæst.* vi. 8., who had conversed with some of the party. The curiosity of the Romans is reflected in the long episode about the Nile in the tenth book of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, where the previous attempts to reach its source are enumerated:

"Quæ tibi noscendi Nilum, Romane, cupido est,  
Et Phariis Persisque fuit, Macetumque tyrannis:  
Nullaque non ætas voluit conferre futuris  
Notitiam; sed vincit adhuc natura latendi," &c.

related: the conspiracies which were concerted against the emperor at home, his redoubled efforts to secure the favour of the populace, and his cruel precaution of destroying every man of eminence who might become the centre of fresh machinations to his prejudice. In the year 819, he at last found leisure to execute his scheme of travel, so far, at least, as to visit Greece; where he presented himself at the public spectacles, and gratified his passion for dancing and singing, before promiscuous assemblages, with still less reserve than at home. All the states which held musical contests had hastened, even before his arrival, to humour him with the offer of their prizes, and Nero had received their envoys with the highest honours, and invited them to his table. When one of them begged him to give a specimen of his singing, and his skill was rapturously applauded, he declared that the Greeks alone had ears, and alone deserved the honour of hearing him.<sup>1</sup>

A. D. 66.  
A. U. 819.

Nero remained in Greece to the beginning of the year 821. He was attended by courtiers and court-followers of all descriptions, and many, it was affirmed, of the chief nobility were invited to accompany him, that he might slay them more securely at a distance from the city. However this may be, the ministers of his luxury and panders to his vices formed the most conspicuous portion of his escort; for he seems to have prosecuted his enormities among the despised Greeks more shamelessly than ever.<sup>2</sup> The great ambition of the Emperor, now following in the track of Mummius, Flaminius, Agrippa, and Augustus, was to gain the distinction of a *Periodoniceus*, or victor in the whole circle of the

Nero in Greece:  
his triumphs at  
the Grecian  
games.

A. D. 67.  
A. U. 820.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 22.

<sup>2</sup> This absence from Rome may, indeed, have allowed greater licence to exaggeration in our accounts; but generally the Romans indulged their vices more freely abroad. As regards the nuptials of Nero with Sporus under the name of Sabina, it may be worth while to observe that it was in Greece, not in Rome, that they were solemnized. Dion, lxi. 13. Nevertheless, the story of Nero and Pythagoras in Tacitus (*Ann.* xv. 37.) admits of no such qualification.

Games; for in compliment to him, the contests which recurred in successive years at Olympia, Nemea, Delphi, and Corinth were all to be enacted during his residence in the country.<sup>1</sup> Nor was this the only irregularity admitted. At Olympia he demanded a musical contest, such as had never been practised there before; at the Isthmus he contended in tragedy and comedy, which also was contrary to the local usage.<sup>2</sup> The exertions of Nero were not confined to playing, singing, and acting. He presented himself also as a charioteer, nor was he ashamed to receive the prize even when he had fallen with car and horses to the ground. Wherever he went he challenged the most famous artists to contend with him, and extorted every prize from every competitor. A Roman consular enacted the part of herald, and proclaimed in the astonished ears of Greece, *Nero the Emperor is Victor, and he crowns the People of Rome, and the World which is his own.*<sup>3</sup>

The flattery of the Greeks deserved substantial acknowledgment, and Nero was prepared to make a sacrifice for the purpose. He negotiated an exchange of provinces with the senate, resigning the imperial prison-house of Sardinia, and receiving in its place the prefecture of Achaia. He then proclaimed, in the forum at Corinth, the freedom and immunity of the province, while he awarded to his judges the honour of Roman citizenship, together with large presents in money.<sup>4</sup> Another project

Nero proclaims  
the freedom of  
Greece.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 23.; Dion, lxiii. 10., where see Reimar's note. This Olympiad of confusion was afterwards omitted from the list in consequence. Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* iv. 24. Pausan. x. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Lucian, *Ner.* 9.

<sup>3</sup> Dion, lxiii. 14.: στεφανοῖ τὸν τε τῶν Ῥωμαίων δῆμον καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν οἶκον μένην.

<sup>4</sup> Plutarch, *Flamin.*, 12., who might have been a witness . . . Νέρων καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐν Κορίνθῳ . . . says that he made this announcement from the rostrum in the agora. Suetonius, *Ner.* 24., with the zeal of the historians to blacken Nero's character as a Roman, declares that he spoke from the stadium itself. "Quæ beneficia e medio stadio, Isthmiorum die, sua ipse voce pronuntiavit." Dion, lxiii. 11., does not mention the place.



ascribed to him, magnificent and useful in itself, may have had no other object in his mind than to render him famous in history; in almost any other human being we should look for some worthier motive for it. This was the cutting of the Isthmus of Corinth, a measure often before proposed and attempted, but never achieved.<sup>1</sup> The work was commenced: convicts were condemned to labour upon it, and among them the learned Stoic Musonius Rufus, removed from Gyarus, whither he had been banished as an accomplice in Piso's conspiracy, was seen by another philosopher handling the spade and pick-axe. But men of science from Egypt assured the emperor that, if the work were effected, the waters of the Corinthian gulf, being higher than the Saronic, would submerge the island of Ægina, and after Nero's departure the design was promptly abandoned.<sup>2</sup> The Romans regarded its frustration as a judgment perhaps on his unnatural pride. In commencing the work with a sacrifice, it had been remarked, as an instance of the hatred he bore the senate, that he had prayed simply that it might turn out well *for the Emperor and the People of Rome*.<sup>3</sup>

His project for cutting through the Isthmus.

It is not impossible, however, that there may have been a politic motive in this visit to Greece, such as I have formerly suggested for the expedition of Caius into Gaul. Fresh disturbances had broken out in Judea: the cruelties of Gessius Florus had excited a sedition, which Cestius Gallus advanced to Jerusalem from Antioch to repress. But here he had

A political motive may be assigned for this visit to Greece.

<sup>1</sup> On these futile attempts see Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* iv. 4. Lucan also alludes to this as one of the common visions of ambition and enterprise. *Phars.* vi. 60.:

"Tot potuere manus adjungere Seston Abydo, . . .

Et ratibus longæ flexus donare Maleæ."

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 19.; Dion, lxxiii. 16.; Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* iv. 24., v. 19. I believe there is no foundation for the idea of the one sea being higher than the other. A similar notion respecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean has prevailed to much later times. The late French Survey (1853) makes, I am told, the former one metre higher than the latter.

<sup>3</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 37.: "Dissimulata senatus mentione."

encountered the people in arms, and had been suddenly overpowered and slain. The Jews were elated with success and hopeless of pardon; it was soon evident that the great war which must decide the fate of their country, and with it of the Roman empire of the East, so often threatened, so long delayed, had commenced. But Corbulo was almost on the spot; his legions were mighty, his name still mightier; such forces under such a leader might be trusted to do the work of Rome thoroughly in any quarter. Nevertheless the

Nero jealous of Corbulo. jealousy of the wretched prince prevailed over all concern for the interests of his country.<sup>1</sup> He

trembled at the increase of influence this new war might bring to his formidable proconsul. This was the moment he

Summons him to Greece, and puts him to death. chose for repairing in person to the threshold of his province, and summoning the man he feared to attend upon him in Greece. At the same time

he ordered Vespasianus, who had already distinguished himself in the British war, but had acquired as yet no dangerous pre-eminence, to take command of the forces destined for Palestine. Corbulo must have known that he was superseded: he must have felt his summons as a disgrace; he must have apprehended personal danger. Yet had he known that every step he took westward was bringing him straight to his doom, such was his fidelity as a soldier that he would have obeyed without hesitation. No sooner had he arrived at Cenchreæ, the port of Corinth, than he was met by emissaries from Nero bearing him the order to dispatch himself. Without murmur or remonstrance, he plunged a sword into his heart, exclaiming as he struck the blow, *Rightly served!*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The remark of Tiridates to Nero at Rome, "What a good slave you have in Corbulo," Dion, lxi. 6., was meant, I suppose, to excite his apprehensions of a man who with such power condescended to servitude.

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxi. 17.: *παύων ἐλθεν, ἄξιος*. We have now lost the guidance of Tacitus, and are less certain of our dates. Dion places this event in 820. The appointment of Vespasian was certainly towards the end of 819 (Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iii. 4. 2.), and Zumpt thinks that Corbulo had fallen before this appointment was made. On the whole, I do not see reason to reject the date in Dion.

Nor was the gallant Corbulo the tyrant's only victim. At the same time he summoned two brothers, Rufus and Proculus, of the great Scribonian house, who commanded in the two Germanies, to meet him in Greece, under pretence of conferring with them on state affairs. The summons was in fact a recall, and the pretence which accompanied it could hardly have deceived them; yet they too obeyed with the same alacrity as Corbulo, and fell, perhaps not unwittingly, into the same snare. Some specific charges were laid against them; but no opportunity was given them of meeting them, nor were they allowed to see the emperor. They killed themselves in despair.<sup>1</sup>

Assassination  
of two other  
proconsuls.

Although during his sojourn in Greece, Nero traversed the province in every direction, it was observed that he abstained from visiting either Athens or Sparta. With respect to the city of Lycurgus it was affirmed merely that he kept aloof from it lest the austerity of its usages should prove irksome to him; but he dared not enter the abode of the Erinnyes, from dread of their vengeance on his crimes.<sup>2</sup> Another account said that he refrained from initiation into the mysteries of Eleusis, which was denied, under direst imprecations, to the impious and impure.<sup>3</sup> Of these awful legends of Grecian antiquity but a faint and confused echo resounded in Italy. To the Latin or the Sabine it little mattered whether the murderer shrank from Athens or Eleusis, whether it was the avenging Furies or the pure goddess of the mysteries before whom he trembled to appear. *Give but freedom to the people, they said, to declare what they really think, and who so base as to hesitate between the lots of Seneca and Nero; Nero who more than once deserved the*

Nero shrinks  
from present-  
ing himself at  
Athens, and  
from initiation  
into the myste-  
ries at Eleusis.

<sup>1</sup> Dion, l. c.

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxiii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 34. There seems to be a confusion between the two accounts, and that of Suetonius appears the more worthy of belief. The furies were already present to the murderer of Agrippina: "Sæpe confessus exagitari se materna specie, verberibusque Furiarum ac tædis ardentibus."



The indignation of the Romans against him expressed by Juvenal.

*sack, the serpent, and the ape, the instruments of death for parricide. True, Orestes by divine command had slain his mother; but he at least avenged the death of a father—Nero had assisted at the slaughter of Claudius: Orestes spared at least his wife and sister—Nero had murdered both: Orestes had not poisoned a kinsman—Nero had mingled aconite for many: above all, Orestes had never sung upon the stage, nor chanted, like Nero, the fall of Ilion. This it seems was the crown and climax of his crimes, the last and worst of the indignities he heaped on Rome; this was the deed for which the sword of the avenger was most fitly drawn.<sup>1</sup> For such, exclaims Juvenal, forsooth, were the acts, such were the arts of our high-born prince, proud to degrade himself on a foreign stage, and earn the paltry chaplets of the Grecian games. Let him lay before the image of Domitius the mantle of Thyestes, the mask of Antigone or Melanippe; let him hang his votive lyre on the marble statue of Augustus.<sup>2</sup>*

Beneath this veil of rhetoric lies a truth which it is the province of history to remark. The Romans, from age to

<sup>1</sup> Juvenal, viii. 211. foll.:

“Libera si dentur populo suffragia, &c. . . .  
Troica non scripsit.”

He composed his tragedy, *Τροίας ἄλωσις*, before; he took occasion to sing it at the burning of Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Juvenal, l. c. 224.:

“Hæc opera atque hæ sunt generosi Principis artes,  
Gaudentis fædo peregrina ad pulpita soeco  
Prostitui, Graæque apium meruisse coronæ.  
Majorum effigies habeant insignia vocis, . . .  
Et de marmoreo citharam suspende colosso.”

Some critics have been tempted to interpret the last line of the Colossus of Nero himself, which stood in the entrance of his golden house, said to have been 110 or 120 feet in height. Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* xxxiv. 18.) gives us to understand that this statue was of marble, while such colossal figures were generally cast in bronze. “Ea statua indicavit interisse æris fundendi scientiam.” But it seems safer to refer it to the statement of Suetonius (*Ner.* 12.): “citharam a iudicibus ad se delatam adoravit, ferrique ad Augusti statuum jussit.”

age, viewed their own times in a very different light from that in which they have appeared to posterity. The notion of Juvenal that the acting and singing of Nero were in fact his most flagrant enormities was felt no doubt, even in his own day, as a wild exaggeration; nevertheless it points to the principle, then still in vigour, of the practical religion of antiquity, the principle of faith in its social traditions. With cruelty and oppression the Romans were so familiar that Nero's atrocities in this respect, so harrowing to our feelings, made little impression upon them; but his desecration of their national manners, his abandonment of the *mos majorum*, the usage of his ancestors, startled them like impiety or sacrilege. They were not aware how far they had really drifted from the habits of antiquity, how much of foreign poison they had admitted into their veins. Theoretically they still held in sanctimonious horror the customs of the stranger; foreign usages might be innocent, nay, laudable, in their own place, but to introduce them into Rome was a monstrous sin, a sin, not against the gods in whom they no longer believed, but against the Nation, in which they believed more intensely perhaps than ever. The State or Nation was itself gradually assuming in their eyes the personality of a distinct divinity, in which all other divinities were absorbed: the Hellenism which Nero vaunted was apostasy from the goddess Roma.

Why they regarded his acting and singing as the climax of his enormities.

The Greeks on the other hand would regard, we may suppose, with more indulgence the caprices of their imperial visitor; they were accustomed to flatter, and in this instance there was some excuse for flattering a humour so flattering to themselves. The miserable vices he paraded before them were too like their own, at least in their period of corruption, to elicit strong moral reprobation. Nevertheless, if we may credit our accounts, he found more effectual means of disgusting them. The imperial tyranny was always pursued, as by its shadow, by profuse and fatal expenditure. It seemed unable to move without the attendance of a crowd of harpies, ever demand-

Nero plunders Greece of her monuments of art.

ing their prey with maw insatiable. Every day required fresh plunder; every day proscriptions and confiscations revealed the prince's necessities, and if these for a moment slackened for want of victims, his hands were laid on the monuments of art, on every object on which money could be raised throughout the devoted land. The temples as well as the dwellings and the forums of Greece were ransacked again for the costliest and most cherished treasures, to be sold by auction to the highest bidder, or redeemed at exorbitant prices by their unhappy owners. Greece was powerless to resist, and her murmurs were drowned in the acclamations of the hired applauders; but she felt her wrongs deeply, and the pretended boon of freedom, accompanied by a precarious immunity, was regarded perhaps as an insult rather than a favour.<sup>1</sup>

Rome at least, it might be hoped, would breathe again during the absence of her hateful tormenter. But this, we are assured, was as far from her as ever. Her condition had become even more miserable. The emperor had given the government of Italy to a freedman named Helius, and this minion exercised cruelty and rapine at his own caprice, not even deigning to ask the prince's pleasure beforehand on the executions and confiscations he commanded.<sup>2</sup> Yet Helius was not unfaithful to his master's interests. On the first symptoms of danger from discontent in the city or the provinces, for such symptoms began at last to threaten, he urged him to hasten back to the seat of government, and it was Nero's obstinacy alone that postponed his return for some months. *You admonish me, you entreat me*, replied the infatuated wretch, *to present myself again at Rome; nay, but you should rather dissuade me from returning, until I have reaped my full harvest of laurels.* This harvest was not yet gathered in, and the cries

Helius governs  
Rome during  
Nero's absence.

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lxi. 11.; Suet. *Ner.* 32. Nero, it will be remembered, had begun a systematic robbery of Greece, and extended it to Asia, before this time. See Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 23., and above, ch. liii.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 23.; Dion, lxi. 12.



of the keeper of the city, already trembling for the fate of the empire, were disregarded, while there yet remained a stadium to be trodden, or a chaplet to be won in Greece. At the commencement, however, of the year 821 the aspect of affairs had become still more serious.<sup>1</sup> Plots for the subversion of the government were believed to be rife in the armies of the West. The heads of administration at Rome knew not whom of their officers in Gaul or Spain to trust. Deep gloom had settled down on the upper classes in the capital; the temper of the populace itself, so long the stay of Nero's tyranny, was uncertain. Helius again urged him to hasten his return. He crossed over to Greece to confer with him in person. He repeated his instances with increasing fervour. At last when there seemed no more of fame or booty to be wrung from Greece, Nero deigned to take ship, though the season of navigation had not yet commenced, and urged his prow through stormy seas to the haven of Puteoli.<sup>2</sup>

At Delphi he had consulted the oracle about his future fortunes, and had been warned, we are told, against *the seventy-third year*, a response which seemed to the youth of thirty to portend a great length of days, but was found in the sequel to have another and a fatal signification.<sup>3</sup> Fortified, however, by this delusion, he had returned to Italy with little anxiety, and when some of the precious objects that followed in his train were lost by shipwreck, he vaunted in the plenitude of his self-assurance that the fishes themselves would restore them. After losing and again recovering both Britain and Armenia, his

Nero's return  
to Italy, and  
triumphal en-  
try into Rome.

<sup>1</sup> We must place at this period the futile conspiracy of Vinicius at Beneventum, which is cursorily mentioned by Suetonius (*Ner.* 36.), but by no other author.

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxiii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Suct. *Ner.* 40. The seventy-third year referred, it seems, to the age of his successor Galba. The story we may suppose was invented to fit the event. The oracle at Delphi had fallen into disrepute, but was still consulted by the vain and frivolous. It is not improbable that Nero insisted on receiving a response. Comp. the story of Appius in Lucan, v. 122. foll., recounted in chapter xvii.

confidence in his good fortune had become, it is said, unbounded. It was at Naples, he remembered, that he had commenced his long course of artistic victories. Now arrived at the height of his glory, he determined to celebrate his successes by a triumphal entry into the Campanian capital, with a team of milk-white horses. The walls were broken down to admit the chariot of the Hieronicus, and the same extravagance was repeated when he entered Antium, his native place, and the Albanum, his favourite residence, and once more, when he presented himself before Rome.<sup>1</sup> He drove in pomp through the city, in the chariot in which Augustus had triumphed, with the flutist Diodorus by his side arrayed in a purple robe, and a mantle blazing with golden stars, wearing on his head the Olympian coronal, and waving the Pythian in his hand. He was preceded by a long train of attendants bearing aloft his other chaplets and the titles of all his victories: he was followed by his five thousand Augustani, with loud and measured acclamations, as the soldiers who shared his glory. The procession passed through the Circus, some arches of which were demolished to admit it, and thence to the Velabrum and the forum, skirting the base of the Palatine to the Porta Mugionis, the chief ascent to the hill and temple of Apollo on its summit. The sacrifice of victims, the flinging of odours, and every other accompaniment of a military triumph, were duly observed in this mock solemnity: the statues of the emperor were decked with crowns and lyres; the citizens hailed their hero with the titles of Nero-Apollo and Nero-Hercules, invoking his *divine voice*, and pronouncing all who heard it blessed. The affair was concluded by the striking of medals, on which Nero was represented, to the shame and horror of all genuine patriots, in the garb of a flute-player.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 25. Brotier cites the statement of Vitruvius, ix. præf.: "Nobilibus athletis qui Olympia, Pythia, Isthmia, Nemea vicissent, Græcorum majores ita magnos honores constituerunt, uti . . . cum revertuntur in suas civitates cum victoria, triumphantes quadrigis in mœnia et in patrias invehantur."

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxiii. 20.; Suet. *Ner.* 25.

But the hour of retribution was at hand. Notwithstanding the servile flattery of the senate, and the triumphs and supplications it had decreed, Nero felt uneasy at the murmurs no longer stifled, and the undis-  
 sembled gloom, which now surrounded him in his capital, and withdrew himself from Rome to the freer air of Campania. Meanwhile the discontent repressed in the city was finding vent in the provinces, and the camps, thronged as they were with kinsmen of the mocked and injured senators, were brooding over projects of revenge. Among the most distinguished of the officers who at this time held commands and enjoyed the confidence of their soldiers, was Servius Sulpicius Galba, who for several years had governed the Hither Spain. Connected with the first families of Rome, and descended from many heroes of the camp and forum, this man stood high in public regard, and in the admiration of the emperors themselves, for his courage, his skill, and his austerity. He had deserved well of Caius for the vigour with which, at a critical moment, he drew up the reins of discipline in the Rhenish camps; still better of Claudius for refusing the offer of his own soldiers to raise him to empire on Caius's death. He had held command in Aquitania, and was for two years proconsul of Africa: he had received the triumphal ornaments, and been admitted to the priestly colleges of the Titii, the Quindecemvirs, and the Augustales. Full of years and honours, he had retired from public employment through the first half of Nero's principate, till summoned to preside over the Tarraconensis. He exercised his powers with vigilance and a harshness which perhaps was salutary, until the emperor's growing jealousy warned him to shroud his reputation under the veil of indolence or even neglect, and thus he escaped the fate of Corbulo and lived to avenge it.<sup>1</sup> *Galba was in his seventy-third year.* In his childhood he had been brought,

Discontent in  
the provinces.

Character and  
position of Ser-  
vius Sulpicius  
Galba, com-  
mander in  
Spain.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Galb.* 9. His government in Spain extended over eight years, from 814 to 821. Comp. Plutarch. *Galb.* 4.



it was reported, with others of the young nobility, to salute the aged Augustus; and the emperor, taking him playfully by the cheek, had said, *And thou too, child, shalt one day taste our empire.*<sup>1</sup> Tiberius, it was added, had learned from the diviner, the splendid destiny that awaited his old age, but had remarked complacently, that to himself it could not matter.<sup>2</sup> Nero, it seems, whom these prognostications touched more nearly, either forgot, or was lulled to false security about them.

Early in the winter of 821, while Nero was still absent in Greece, Galba received overtures from C. Julius Vindex, prefect of the Farther Gaul, for a simultaneous rising. Vindex was himself a Gallo-Roman scion of a royal house in Aquitania, adopted into the imperial gens; but while he imbibed the pride of a Roman, he retained the impetuous spirit of his ancestors; and the enormities of Nero, aggravated no doubt in his esteem by his exactions in Gaul itself, roused his determination to overthrow him without a view to personal aggrandizement. The time indeed was yet far distant when a foreigner could even conceive the idea of gaining the purple. But he fixed his eyes on Galba, as the ablest of the class from which fortune could make an emperor, and it was with vexation that he found the old chief too cautious to be driven headlong into a revolt, the event of which might seem so doubtful.<sup>3</sup>

Galba indeed had good reason to hesitate. Nero set a price on the head of Vindex, whose designs were speedily revealed to him, and though the forces of the Gaulish province were disposed to follow their chief, the more powerful legions of the Lower Germany, under Virginus Rufus, were in full march against

Overtures for a revolt made to him by Vindex in Gaul.

Virginus conspires with Vindex.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Galb.* 4.: καὶ σὺ, τέκνον, τῆς ἀρχῆς ἡμῶν παρατρέψῃ . . . “vivat sane quando id ad nos nihil pertinet.” The same presages and others are mentioned also by Tacitus, *Ann.* vi. 20.; Dion, lvii. 19.; Joseph. *Antiq.* xviii. 6 19.

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxiii. 22, 23.; Suet. *Galb.* 6, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

them. The armies met at Vesontio, and there Vindex and Virginius at a private interview agreed to conspire together, but their troops could come to no such understanding; the Virginians attacked the soldiers of Vindex, and almost cut them to pieces. Vindex thereupon, with the haste and levity of his race, threw himself on his sword, and the rebellion seemed for a moment to be crushed. But Galba had become alarmed for his own safety. He had received communications from a rebel, all whose acts were well known to the government. He had been urged to proclaim himself emperor, and no refusal on his part could efface the crime of having been judged worthy of such a distinction. Indeed, so at least he pretended, he had already intercepted orders from Nero to take his life, and a plot for his assassination was opportunely detected among a company of slaves presented him by a freedman of the emperor.<sup>1</sup> Thus impelled to provide for his own safety, he called his troops together, and setting before them the images of the tyrant's noblest victims, harangued them on the state of public affairs. The soldiers saluted him as Emperor, but he would only allow himself to be styled Legatus of the Senate and the People. He proceeded, however, at once to prorogue all civil business, and provide for immediate war by raising forces both legionary and auxiliary, from the youth of the province. At the same time he convened the notables of the country, to give perhaps a civil colour to his military enterprise.<sup>2</sup> The Gaulish and Germanic legions, now reunited, after the death of Vindex, had offered to raise Virginius to the purple; they conjured him to assume the title of Emperor, and inscribe on his busts the names of Cæsar and Augustus.<sup>3</sup> But he steadily refused the

Disagreement between their armies, and battle of Vesontio.

Vindex slays himself.

Galba is saluted Emperor by his soldiers.

Virginius, proclaimed by his own soldiers, declines the title.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Galb.* 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Ner.* l. c.

<sup>3</sup> Dion, lxi. 25.; Tacitus, *Hist.* i. 8., speaks more hesitatingly: "Nec statim pro Galba Virginius: an imperare voluisset dubium: delatum ei a milite imperium conveniebat."

honours thrust upon him, erased the obnoxious letters, and at length persuaded his admirers to leave the decision of affairs to the authorities at home. He entered, however, into communication with Galba, who had now, it seems, determined on the attempt, and the news was bruited far and wide that Gaul and Spain had revolted, and that, whoever might eventually obtain the empire, it had passed irrevocably from the monster Nero.<sup>1</sup>

At once it appeared how many pretenders to power might exist in the bosom of the provincial camps. The fatal secret of the empire, *that a prince might be created elsewhere than at Rome*, so long undiscovered, so alien, as was supposed, from the sentiments of the age, was revealed in more than one quarter.<sup>2</sup> Not in Gaul and Spain only, but in Africa and the Lower Germany, the legions were ready to make an emperor of their own chief. Claudius Macer in the one, Fonteius Capito in the other, were proclaimed by the soldiers. At the same time Salvius Otho, Nero's ancient favourite, who was weary of his long oblivion on the shores of the Atlantic, declared himself a supporter of Galba, and lent him his own slaves and plate, to swell his retinue and increase his resources. The Civil Wars had again begun.

Such was the march of disaffection, the first anticipations of which had been revealed to Helius before the end of 820, and had induced him to urge the emperor, first by letter and afterwards in person, to hasten home. Nero, as we have seen, could not be persuaded to regard them seriously, or postpone to their consideration his paltry gratifications and amusements. After his return to Rome, he had again quitted it for Naples in March, 821, and it was on the 19th of that month, the anni-

Other candidates for the empire. Claudius Macer in Africa, Fonteius Capito in Germania.

Nero receives news of the revolt of Vindex.

<sup>1</sup> Clinton computes that Galba allowed himself to be proclaimed emperor on the 3rd April. *Fast. Rom.* i. 50.

<sup>2</sup> I adopt here the well-known observation of Tacitus at the opening of his Histories: "evulgato imperii arcano, posse principem alibi quam Romæ fieri." *Hist.* i. 4.



versary of Agrippina's murder, while presiding at a gymnastic exhibition, that he received the news of the revolt of Vindex. Still he treated the announcement with contempt, and even expressed satisfaction at the prospect of new confiscations. He witnessed the contests with unabated interest, and retired from them to a banquet. Interrupted by fresh and more alarming despatches, he resented them with petulant ill-humour; for eight days he would neither issue orders nor be spoken to on the subject. Finally arrived a manifesto from Vindex himself, which moved him to send a message to the senate, requiring it to denounce the rebel as a public enemy; but he excused himself from appearing in person, alleging a cold or sore throat which he must nurse for the conservation of his voice. Nothing so much incensed him as Vindex calling him Ahenobarbus instead of Nero, and disparaging his skill in singing. *Had they ever heard a better performer?* he asked peevishly of all around him. He now hurried trembling to Rome; but he was reassured, we are told, on the way by noticing a sculpture which represented a Gaulish soldier dragged headlong by a Roman knight.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, with his usual levity, instead of consulting in full senate, or haranguing on the state of affairs in the forum, he held a hasty conversation with a few only of his nobles, and passed the day in explaining to them a new water organ, on which he proposed, he said, *with Vindex's good leave*, to perform in public. He completed and dedicated a temple to Poppæa: once more he celebrated the games of the circus, once more he played and sang and drove the chariot. But it was for the last time. Vindex had fallen, but Galba, it was now announced, had raised the standard of revolt. The rebel's property in Rome was immediately confiscated, to which he replied by selling *under the spear* the emperor's estates in Spain. The hour of retribution, long delayed, was now swiftly advancing; courier

His levity succeeded by ill-humour, and again by presumptuous confidence.

Announcement of the defection of Virginius and Galba.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 41.

after courier was dashing through the gates, bringing news of the defection of generals and legions. The revolt of Virginius was no longer doubtful. At this intelligence the puny tyrant fainted: coming to himself he tore his robes and smote his head with pusillanimous wailings. To the consolations of his nurse he replied, with the cries of an infant, *Never was such ill-fortune as his: other Cæsars had fallen by the sword, he alone must lose the empire still living.*<sup>1</sup> At last he recollected himself sufficiently to summon troops from Illyricum for the defence of Italy; but these, it was found, were in correspondence with the enemy.<sup>2</sup> Another resource, which served only to show to what straits he was driven, was to land sailors from the fleet at Ostia, and form them into a legion.<sup>3</sup> Then he invoked the pampered populace to arise in his behalf, and dressed up courtesans and dancers as Amazons to attend his march: next moment he exclaimed that he would take ship for Alexandria, and there earn subsistence by singing in the streets.<sup>4</sup> Again he launched into invectives against the magistrates abroad, threatening to recall and disgrace them throughout his dominions: the provinces he would give up to pillage, he would slay every Gaul in the city, he would massacre the senate, he would let loose the lions on the populace, he would lay Rome in ashes. Finally, the tyrant's vein exhausted, he proposed in woman's mood to meet the rebels unarmed, trusting in his beauty, his tears, and the persuasive tones of his voice, to win them to obedience.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 42.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 9. This, I presume, was the force placed under Rubrius Gallus; Dion, lxi. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Plut. *Galb.* 15.

<sup>4</sup> Dion, lxi. 27.; Plut. *Galb.* 2.

<sup>5</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 43. This writer affirms that Nero deposed both the consuls, and assumed the fasces himself without a colleague, from a persuasion that the Gauls could not be subdued except by a consul. The story is not supported by other authorities, and seems in itself improbable. Neither Cæsar nor Camillus were consuls when they conquered the Gauls. Yet such a notion might have been instilled into the public mind by the victorious consulships of Marius. Or was sole consul the nearest approach an emperor could make to the office of

Meanwhile the excitement among the knights and senators at the prospect of deliverance kept pace with the progress of revolt abroad. Portents were occurring at their doors. Blood rained on the Alban Last hours and death of Nero. mount; the gates of the Julian sepulchre burst open of their own accord. The Hundred Days of Nero were drawing rapidly to a close. He had landed in Italy about the end of February, and now at the beginning of June his cause had already become hopeless. Galba, though steadfast in his resolution, had not yet set his troops in motion: nevertheless, Nero was no longer safe in the city. The people, at first indifferent, were now clamouring against him; for there was a dearth of provisions, and a vessel, just arrived from Alexandria, was found, to their disgust, to bear not grain, but fine sand for the wrestlers in the amphitheatre.<sup>1</sup> The prætorians had been seduced by their prefect Nymphidius, to whom the camp was abandoned by the flight of Tigellinus. Nero was left without advisers; the senators stood aloof; of Helius, lately so powerful and energetic, we hear nothing. Terrified by dreams, stung by ridicule or desertion, when his last hope of succour was announced to have deceived him, the wretched tyrant started from his couch at supper, upset the tables, and dashed his choicest vessels to the ground; then taking poison from Locusta and placing it in a golden casket, he crossed from the palace to the Servilian gardens, and sent his trustiest freedman to secure a galley at Ostia.<sup>2</sup> He conjured some tribunes and centurions, with a handful of guards, to join his flight; but all refused; and one blunter than the rest exclaimed tauntingly, *Is it then so hard to die?*<sup>3</sup> At last at midnight, finding that even

dietator? At all events we shall find the consuls in their chairs immediately on the death of Nero.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 45. Comp. Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xxxv. 47.: "E Nilo arena."

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 47. The Romans imagined Locusta a constant attendant at Nero's table. So in the rough but energetic phrase of Turnus (Fragm. apud Wernsdorf, *Poet. Min.* iii.) she is described as: "Circe inter vernas nota Neronis."

<sup>3</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 47. A quotation from Virgil: "Usque adeone mori miserum est?"



the sentinels had left their posts, he sent or rushed himself to assemble his attendants. Every door was closed; he knocked, but no answer came. Returning to his chamber, he found the slaves fled, the furniture pillaged, the case of poison removed. Not a guard, not a gladiator, was at hand to pierce his throat. *I have neither friend nor foe*, he exclaimed. He would have thrown himself into the Tiber, but his courage failed him. He must have time, he said, and repose to collect his spirits for suicide, and his freedman Phaon at last offered him his villa in the suburbs, four miles from the city. In undress and barefooted, throwing a rough cloak over his shoulders, and a kerchief across his face, he glided through the doors, mounted a horse, and, attended by Sporus and three others, passed the city-gates with the dawn of the summer-morning.<sup>1</sup> The Nomentane road led him beneath the wall of the prætorians, whom he might hear uttering curses against him, and pledging vows to Galba; and the early travellers from the country asked him as they met, *What news of Nero?* or remarked one to another, *These men are pursuing the tyrant*. Thunder and lightning, and a shock of earthquake, added horror to the moment. Nero's horse started at a dead body on the road-side, the kerchief fell from his face, and a prætorian passing by recognised and saluted him.<sup>2</sup> At the fourth milestone the party quitted the highway, alighted from their horses, and scrambled on foot through a cane-brake, laying their own cloaks to tread on, to the rear of the promised villa.<sup>3</sup> Phaon now desired Nero

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 48. Comp. Dion, lxi. 27.; Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iv. 9. 2.; Eutrop. vii. 9.; Aur. Vict. *Epit.* 5.

<sup>2</sup> "Cadaver," possibly, the carcass of an animal; but the word is more commonly used for a human body. The odious familiarity of the Romans with such horrors may be illustrated from the story told of Vespasian (Suet. *Vesp.* 5.). "Prandente eo quondam canis extrarius *e trivio* manum humanam intulit, mensæque subjecit." The prætorian met the party on his way towards the city; he was not privy to the change of feeling among his comrades.

<sup>3</sup> The villa lay between the Salarian and Nomentane roads (Suet. l. c.), which branched off from the city at the Colline gate. Strab. v. 3. 1.

to crouch in a sand-pit hard by, while he contrived to open the drain from the bath-room, and so admit him unperceived; but he vowed he would not go *alive*, as he said, *underground*, and remained trembling beneath the wall. Taking water from a puddle in his hand, *This*, he said, *is the famous Drink of Nero*.<sup>1</sup> At last a hole was made, through which he crept on all fours into a narrow chamber of the house, and there threw himself on a pallet.<sup>2</sup> The coarse bread that was offered him he could not eat, but swallowed a little tepid water. Still he lingered, his companions urging him to seek refuge, without delay, from the insults about to be heaped on him. He ordered them to dig a grave, and lay down himself to give the measure; he desired them to collect bits of marble to decorate his sepulchre, and prepare water to cleanse and wood to burn his corpse, sighing meanwhile, and muttering, *What an artist to perish*.<sup>3</sup> Presently a slave of Phaon's brought papers from Rome, which Nero snatched from him, and read that the senate had proclaimed him an enemy, and decreed his death, *in the ancient fashion*. He asked what that was? and was informed that the culprit was stripped, his head placed in a fork, and his body smitten with the stick till death. Terrified at this announcement, he took two daggers from his bosom, tried their edge one after the other, and again laid them down, alleging that *the moment was not yet arrived*. Then he called on Sporus to commence his funereal lamentations; then he implored some of the party to set him the example; once and again he reproached himself with his own timidity. *Fie! Nero, Fie!* he muttered in Greek, *courage, man! come, rouse thee!* Suddenly was heard the trampling of horsemen, sent to seize the cul-

<sup>1</sup> "Hæc est Neronis decocta:" Suet. Dion. In allusion, it may be presumed, to a beverage of water boiled, sweetened, and flavoured, which Nero had himself invented.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. l. c.: "Quadrupes per angustias effossæ cavernæ receptus in proximam cellam." The Roman houses were not furnished with sewers, but every bath had its drain.

<sup>3</sup> Suet. l. c.: "Qualis artifex pereo;" Dion, c. 29.

prit alive. Then at last, with a verse of Homer hastily ejaculated, *Sound of swift-footed steeds strikes on my ears*, he placed a weapon to his breast, and the slave Epaphroditus drove it home.<sup>1</sup> The blow was scarcely struck, when the centurion rushed in, and, thrusting his cloak against the wound, pretended he was come to help him. The dying wretch could only murmur, *Too late*, and, *Is this your fidelity?* and expired with a horrid stare on his countenance. He had adjured his attendants to burn his body, and not let the foe bear off his head; and this was now allowed him: the corpse was consumed with haste and imperfectly, but at least without mutilation.<sup>2</sup>

Nero perished on the 9th of June, 821, at the age of thirty years and six months, in the fourteenth year of his principate.<sup>3</sup> The child borne him by Poppæa had died in infancy, and a subsequent marriage with Statilia Messalina had proved unfruitful.<sup>4</sup>

Extinction of  
the Casarean  
family with  
Nero.

The stock of the Julii, refreshed in vain by grafts from the Octavii, the Claudii, and the Domitii, had been reduced to his single person, and with Nero the adoptive race of the great dictator was extinguished. The first of the Cæsars had married four times, the second thrice, the third twice, the fourth thrice again, the fifth six times, and lastly, the sixth thrice also. Of these repeated unions, a large number had borne offspring, yet no descendants of them survived.

<sup>1</sup> Hom. *Il.* x. 535.: "Ἰππων μ' ὀκνύδων ἀμφὶ κτύπος οὐατα βάλλει.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 49.

<sup>3</sup> The day was said to be the anniversary of the death of Octavia. Clinton, *Fast. Rom.* i. 52., calculates Nero's life at thirty years five months and twenty-six days, counting from December 15. 790, to June 9. 821; his reign at thirteen years seven months and twenty-eight days.

<sup>4</sup> The death of Poppæa had been quickly followed by Nero's marriage with Statilia Messalina, grand-daughter of Statilius Taurus, with whom he had previously intrigued, having procured the death of her husband, Attieus Vestinus, during his consulship, to obtain her. Suet. *Ner.* 35.; Tac. *Ann.* xv. 68, 69. The consulship and execution of Vestinus are placed in the year 818, while Poppæa was still alive. We hear no more of Statilia, except that she survived the emperor.



A few had lived to old age, many reached maturity, some were cut off by early sickness, the end of others was premature and mysterious; but of the whole number a large proportion, which it would be tedious to calculate, were victims of domestic jealousy and politic assassination. Such was the price paid by the usurper's family for their splendid inheritance; but the people accepted it in exchange for internal troubles and promiscuous bloodshed; and though they too had their sacrifices to make, though many noble trees were stripped of their branches under the Cæsars as starkly as the Cæsars themselves, yet order and prosperity had reigned generally throughout the empire; the world had enjoyed a breathing time of a hundred years, to prepare it for the outbreak of civil commotion, for the fiercer frenzy of international warfare, which are next to be related. With Nero we bid farewell to the Cæsars; at the same time we bid farewell to the state of things which the Cæsars created and maintained. We turn over a page in Roman history. On the verge of a new epoch we would treat with grave respect even the monster with whom the old epoch closes: we may think it well that the corpse even of Nero was un mutilated; that he was buried decently in the Domitian gardens on the Pincian; that though the people evinced a thoughtless triumph at his death, as if it promised them a freedom which they could neither use nor understand, some unknown hands were found to strew flowers on his sepulchre, and the rival king of Parthia adjured the senate to do honour to his memory.<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly the Romans regarded with peculiar feeling the death of the last of the Cæsars.<sup>2</sup> Nero was cut off in

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 50. 57.: "Missis ad senatum literis . . . magno opere oravit, ut Neronis memoria coleretur." It is interesting to learn that the tyrant's obsequies were performed by two nurses of his infancy, and by Acte, the partner of his first excesses ten years before.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Galb.* 1.: "Progenies Cæsarum in Nerone defecit." Eutrop. vii. 9.; Oros. vii. 7.; Dion, lxii. 18., who cites a Sibylline verse:

ἔσχατος Αἰνεαδῶν μητροκτόνος ἡγεμονέυσει.

It will be remembered that Nero was descended through Agrippina from

Expectation of  
his return  
among both  
Romans and  
Christians.

early youth; he perished in obscurity; he was entombed in a private sepulchre with no manifestation of national concern, such as had thrown a gleam of interest over the least regretted of his predecessors. Yet these circumstances would not have sufficed to impart a deep mystery to the event, without the predisposition of the people to imagine that the dynasty which had ruled them for five generations could not suddenly pass away, finally and irrevocably. The idea that Nero still survived, and the expectation of his return to power, continued long to linger among them. More than one pretender arose to claim his empire, and twenty years later a false Nero was protected by the Parthians, among whom he had taken refuge, and only surrendered to the repeated and vehement demands of the Roman government.<sup>1</sup> This popular anticipation was the foundation, perhaps, of the common persuasion of the Christians, when the death of the prince was no longer questioned that he should revisit the earth in the character of Antichrist; and both Romans and Christians seem to have combined in believing that the East, and possibly that Jerusalem itself, would be the scene of his reappearance.<sup>2</sup>

Julia, the daughter of Augustus and Scribonia. His connexion with the Claudii was only adoptive.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 56.; Tac. *Hist.* ii. 8.: "Achaia et Asia falso exterritæ, velut Nero adventaret."

<sup>2</sup> Comp. Suetonius, *Ner.* 40.: "Prædictum a mathematicis Neroni olim erat fore ut destitueretur. . . . Spoponderant tamen quidam destituto Orientis dominationem, nonnulli nominatim regnum Hierosolymorum." There will be different opinions whether this idea sprang originally from the Christians or the Romans; probably it was the result of a common feeling reacting from one to the other.

## CHAPTER LVI.

THE SENATE ACCEPTS GALBA AS EMPEROR.—HIS VIGOUR AND SEVERITY.—STATE OF THE PROVINCES AND THE LEGIONS.—GALBA ADOPTS PISO AS HIS COLLEAGUE, AND SUBMITS HIS CHOICE FIRST TO THE SOLDIERS AND AFTERWARDS TO THE SENATE.—PUNISHMENT OF NERO'S FAVOURITES.—OTHO INTRIGUES FOR THE EMPIRE, AND IS CARRIED BY THE SOLDIERS INTO THE PRÆTORIAN CAMP AND PROCLAIMED EMPEROR.—GALBA GOES FORTH TO MEET THE MUTINEERS, AND IS ASSASSINATED, TOGETHER WITH PISO.—HIS CHARACTER AS AN EMPEROR.—OTHO SUCCEEDS, AND IS THREATENED WITH THE RIVALRY OF VITELLIUS.—REVOLT OF THE LEGIONS OF GAUL.—VITELLIUS, PROCLAIMED EMPEROR, ADVANCES TOWARDS ITALY.—UNEASY POSITION OF OTHO.—HE PUTS HIMSELF AT THE HEAD OF HIS TROOPS, AND MARCHES TO PLACENTIA.—CAMPAIGN IN THE CISALPINE.—BATTLE OF BEDRIACUM.—DEFEAT OF THE OTHONIANS.—OTHO KILLS HIMSELF.—VIRGINIUS REFUSES THE EMPIRE.—THE SENATE ACCEPTS VITELLIUS.—HIS GLUTTONY, SELFISHNESS, AND BARBARITY.—ITALY PLUNDERED BY HIS SOLDIERS.—HE IS WITH DIFFICULTY DISSUADED FROM ENTERING ROME IN ARMS AS A CONQUEROR.—A. D. 68, 69. A. U. 821, 822.

AS soon as they were informed of Nero's departure from the palace, and even before he had quitted Rome, the consuls convened the senate at midnight. Such a summons, though not unprecedented, betokened a public crisis, and when the fathers hurried to the place of meeting, they were greeted with the announcement that the tyrant despaired of his throne and personal safety, and were invited to declare him a public enemy, and pronounce on him sentence of death. They were assured of the utter collapse of the means by which he might once have hoped to make head against the enemy: the prætorians had declared openly against him; some battalions he had sent to meet his assailant had already betrayed his cause; the troops in or near the city, which had been previously drafted from

The senate decrees Nero a public enemy.



the camps in Britain, Germany, and Illyricum for service in the East, were hostile or indifferent; finally, the sailors from the fleet at Ostia were ready to sell themselves to any power which could bid higher for them than the bankrupt emperor. No doubt with money in hand Nero could have protracted the contest; but his means had been exhausted by his frivolous expenses, and the senators knew that it was only by plundering them that he could suddenly replenish his coffers. If they still hesitated, the news that the wretched tyrant had fled the city before break of day sufficed to reassure them. They now felt that they could wreak all their vengeance safely; they responded with acclamations to the invitation of their chiefs, and in launching sentence of death against the culprit, charged their ministers to take him alive if possible, that they might enjoy the sight of his expiring agonies.

This savage satisfaction was, as we have seen, denied them; nevertheless justice was done on the tyrant, and the state was saved. So the senate solemnly declared, and the people, with the cap of liberty on their heads, rushed in crowds to the temples to do homage to the gods who had struck down tyranny, and restored freedom to Rome.<sup>1</sup> This demonstration of the populace was indeed worthless; but some attempt might at least have been expected on the part of the senate, to realize and secure this boasted liberty. The brave Virginius had asserted its right to choose an emperor; such was the furthest extent to which a true patriot could go in the cause of the republic, and such, it was fully understood, was the extent of Galba's meaning, when he proclaimed himself the legatus of the Senate and People. In this solution of the crisis all civil society, at least at Rome, was prepared to acquiesce. The consuls and the tribunes, the patricians and the commons, were equally satisfied with the promise held out to them from beyond the

The consuls,  
Galerius Tra-  
chalus and  
Silius Italicus.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 57.; Dion, lxxiii. 29.; Tac. *Hist.* i. 4.: "Patres læti, usurpata statim libertate, licentius, ut erga principem novum et absentem." Yet, whatever licence the senate assumed, Tacitus does not intimate that it forgot for a moment that it still had a master.

seas, that the choice of the army should be submitted to the ratification of the supreme national council. Nor were the chiefs of the senate at this moment men of bold aspirations or vigorous resolution. One consul, Galerius Trachalus, was noted as a florid declaimer, and nearly connected with the courtiers of the empire; the other, Silius Italicus, was an orator also, and a man of letters, distinguished in later years for his epic on the Punic Wars, virtuous and amiable in private life, discreet and dignified in office, but far more inclined to sing the praises of the Scipios than to emulate them.<sup>1</sup> He beheld Galba descend the Pyrenees and the Alps with his Iberian and Gaulish auxiliaries; but he was dreaming of Hannibal and the Carthaginians, and never woke to comprehend the actual invasion of his country, and subjection of Rome by the sword.

Galba, we have seen, had been proclaimed imperator on the third of April. He was still engaged in making his preparations, or watching events, within his own province, for the death of Vindex had alarmed, and almost shaken him from his purpose, when the news of Nero's condemnation and death was brought him by one who professed to have himself beheld the body of the tyrant. He no longer delayed to advance; but it was necessary to take the long route by land, necessary also perhaps to have a personal interview with Virginius, and ascertain his real intentions and the disposition of the Gaulish legions. Arrived at Narbo, Galba was met by envoys from the senate, charged to convey the sanction of the republic to his claim. If the consuls could have hesitated for a moment in accepting him as their ruler, they would have been impelled by the necessity of counteracting the intrigues of Nym-

The senate sanctions the election of Galba.

<sup>1</sup> See Clinton, *Fast. Rom.* i. 52. Martial says of Silius, vii. 63.:

“ . . . Bis senis ingentem rexerat annum  
Fascibus, asserto qui sacer orbe fuit.”

Comp. also Plin. *Ep.* iii. 7. Galerius was an intimate friend of Otho, and a Galeria, possibly his sister, was wife to A. Vitellius, the son of the courtier Lucius, soon to be a prominent competitor for the purple. Tac. *Hist.* i. 90.

phidius Sabinus, the prefect of the prætorians, who, as we have seen, had withdrawn his cohorts from their fidelity to Nero, and now hastened to offer their services to his rival, with many compliments and presents, asking to be installed, in return, in the highest offices of the state. But Galba was surrounded already by close adherents, who claimed the monopoly of his favours. T. Vinus, and Cornelius Laco, who shared and perhaps controlled his counsels, required him to

reject these overtures. Nymphidius, stung with disappointment, conceived the hope of seizing the empire for himself. He thought himself secure of the prætorians, and, in order to gain the citizens also,

alleged that he was descended, through his mother Nymphidia, from the emperor Caius. He had already sought their favour by surrendering some of Nero's creatures to their vengeance, and had made so much blood to flow, as to cause it to be declared in the senate that, if things went on thus, the tyranny of Nero himself would soon be regretted. Undoubtedly the prætorians as a body continued restless and discontented; they anticipated the loss of the imperial caresses which under Nero had been extended to them alone, and augured that preference under the new reign would be given to the faithful legionaries. Galba's character for severity and parsimony was notorious, and his caustic saying passed from mouth to mouth, that he was wont to *choose his soldiers, not to buy them*.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the enterprise of Nymphidius was hopeless, and so one of his own followers had told him, assuring him that not one family in Rome would voluntarily accept him as Cæsar.<sup>2</sup> *What*, exclaimed the tribune Antonius, *shall we choose Nymphidia's son for our emperor, and sacrifice to him the child of Livia, as we have already sacrificed the child of Agrippina?* Still, even in

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 5.: "Accessit Galbæ vox, pro republica honesta, ipsi aneeps, legi ab se militem non emi." The term "legere" is derived from the ancient practice of the consul, the tribunes, and in some cases perhaps individual soldiers, choosing the best names for service from the roll.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *Galb.* 13.



the licentious camp of the prætorians, the question of empire was a question of descent and dynasty. The claims of the intriguer were laughed to scorn. The soldiers swore fidelity to Galba, and closed their gates against his rival. When he implored admittance and rashly trusted himself among them, he was attacked with sword and spear, and cut to pieces without scruple.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Galba was approaching. From the moment he learned that the senate had sworn in his name, he dropped the title of Legatus and assumed that of Cæsar, while, to indicate that he was engaged in actual warfare in the state's behalf, he marched before his troops cloaked and belted.<sup>2</sup> Competitors, indeed, had risen in various quarters. Besides Clodius Macer in Africa, and Fonteius Capito in Germania, whose attempts have been already mentioned, we read of a Betuus Chilo in Gaul, an Obultronius and a Cornelius Sabinus in Spain. But these pretenders were put down by the adherents of the senate in their own districts; they were all slain in the field, or taken and executed; and Galba himself, as the chosen of the senate, was held responsible for their deaths. The slaughter, indeed, of so many officers of rank caused some dismay at Rome, and this was increased when Galba demanded the sacrifice of such of Nymphidius's chief supporters as had not already killed themselves, among whom was the consul designate Cingonius Varro. The blood of Petronius Turpilianus, a consular, was also required without form of trial, as the man whom Nero had appointed to the command of his forces. The impression of Galba's severity was further enhanced when, on arriving at the Milvian Bridge, he replied to the presumptuous demands of Nero's marine battalions by ordering his men to charge them, and so entered Rome over their bodies. The citizens shuddered at the omen; but the scoffers who had made a jest of the emperor's gray hairs, and contrasted them

Of Betuus Chilo, Obultronius and Cornelius Sabinus.

Galba's vigour and severity in putting down his opponents.

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *Galb.* 14.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Galb.* 11.: Dion, lxiv. 3.; καὶ γέρων καὶ ἀσθενὴς τὰ νεῦρο ὦν.

with the beaming locks of their Claudian Apollo, were effectually silenced.<sup>1</sup>

On the first of January, 822, Galba, who had entered the city only a few days previously, assumed the consulship together with T. Vinus, and all classes hastened to the Capitol to sacrifice to the gods, and swear allegiance to the new emperor. Six months had elapsed since the death of Nero, and the citizens had had time to meditate on the step they were pledged to take, in transferring supreme command from the divine race of the Julii to a mere earthborn dynasty, to a family of their own kind and lineage. The heroic age of the empire had vanished in that short interval. Whatever antiquarians and courtiers might assert, the attempt to connect an imperial house with the national divinities would never succeed again. The illusion had perished like a dream of youth, and the poetry of Roman life was extinguished for ever. It was with no surprise, with no shame, that the citizens now heard of new pretenders to the empire. There was no other claim to empire but force, and wherever two or three legions were encamped together, there resided the virtue by which emperors are created. Notwithstanding the rapid rout and disappearance of Galba's rivals in the provinces, fresh competitors might arise at any moment, and almost in any place, and it was with deep anxiety that patriots inquired what was the state of the provinces, the temper of their garrisons, and the character of their chiefs. The East, they learned, was as yet undisturbed. Syria was held by Licinius Mucianus, a man who, after a career of dissipation and place-hunting in the city, had been removed thus far from home by the jealousy rather than the fears of Claudius, and had been raised unexpectedly to the government by Nero on the sudden disgrace of Corbulo. Vespasian, though command-

Galba enters  
Rome and as-  
sumes the con-  
sulship, Jan. 1.

A. D. 69.  
A. U. 822.

State of the  
provinces and  
attitude of the  
legions and  
their chiefs.

<sup>1</sup> Plut. *Galb.* 15.; Tac. *Hist.* i. 7.: "Ipsa ætas Galbæ irrisui et fastidio erat, assuetis juventæ Neronis, et imperatores forma et decore corporis, ut mos est vulgi, comparantibus."

ing the forces now destined for the final reduction of Judea, was under the orders of his proconsul, whose indolence was satisfied with the second place in the empire, when he might have contended with Galba for the first. Egypt, though nominally held direct from the emperor at Rome, was, in fact, dependent at this moment on the attitude of Syria; and thus the chief granary of the city was secured for the elect of the senate. Africa, on the death of Clodius Macer, had devoted itself to Galba; the two Mauretanas, Rhætia, Noricum, and Thrace, all governed nominally by imperial procurators, were swayed, in fact, by the impulse given them by the legions of the nearest frontiers.<sup>1</sup> On the Rhine the authority of the new emperor was less placidly admitted. Though the southern and central parts of Gaul were generally well disposed to the government established at Rome, partly from their attachment to Vindex, the first of Galba's allies, partly from satisfaction with the privilege they enjoyed of the Roman franchise and immunity, there were certain spots on which the new emperor had laid his hand heavily, others, from their position connected in feeling with the legions of the Upper and Lower Germany, were less disposed to acquiesce in the decision of the city. The Germanic legions, divided into two armies, each three or four legions strong, were hostile to Galba.<sup>2</sup> The passions which had excited some of them to draw their swords against the troops of Vindex, were inflamed rather than allayed by victory. They wanted to present Virginus to the senate as the chosen of the army; they were not satisfied with his refusal to accept the empire: Galba had enticed him into his own camp, and carried him off, far from his own devoted legions, to Rome.<sup>3</sup> The Upper army, deprived of its favourite chief,

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Of the exact number of these legions, and the names by which they were distinguished, I shall have occasion to speak hereafter. The proper complement of these frontier provinces was four to each, as has been stated from Tacitus elsewhere, but one of them, at least, the Fourteenth, had been drafted into Britain.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 9.



disdained the rule of Hordeonius Flaccus, an old and sickly general. The Lower army had given some countenance to the attempt of Fonteius, and was ashamed of his easy overthrow. Galba humoured its vanity by sending it a consular legate, Aulus Vitellius; but the art and industry of this commander, in redressing its grievances and consulting its wishes, aimed at forming an interest for himself rather than riveting obedience to his master.<sup>1</sup> The four legions in Britain were occupied in their insular warfare; they were intent on securing estates and plunder, to form the basis of their own fortunes in the land of their adoption. They took no interest in the mutations of empire at Rome.

A few days after the first of January letters reached the palace announcing a mutiny of the troops of Upper Germania. They demanded another emperor in the place of Galba, but left the choice to the senate and people. Galba had already contemplated adopting an associate in the empire, and had discussed the matter with the most intimate of his friends; for with the indecision of old age, or possibly his natural character, he rarely acted on his own counsels, and was, indeed, generally an instrument in the hands of others. The project had become known, and, while the choice of the imperial conclave was yet uncertain, the citizens weighed among themselves the merits of the presumed candidates. The noblest birth and most ancient lineage were doubtless to be combined with high personal merits: the position of the Cæsar required to be strengthened by an appeal to popular prejudice, and no mere favourite of the palace could hope to satisfy the demands of the people at large. Accordingly, Vinus, despairing for himself, was content to urge the claims of Salvius Otho, while Laeo and the freedman Icclus recommended Piso Licinianus, a descendant of the Crassi and Pompeii, a man whose high birth as well as his noble character had entailed on him the hatred of Nero, and subjected

Mutiny of the legions of Upper Germania. Galba determines to adopt Piso as a colleague in the empire.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 9. 52.

him to banishment. No time was now to be lost. Galba called together Vinius and Laco, with Marius Celsus, a consul designate, and Ducennius Geminus, prefect of the city, and *transacted* with them, in the phrase of Tacitus, the *comitia of the empire*. Their deliberations ended in the choice of Piso, to whom, from the antique severity of his habits and gravity of his demeanour, Galba was personally inclined. But these qualities were too similar to those of the emperor himself to reassure such among the citizens as trembled at his growing unpopularity.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing can be more grave and dignified than this election of an emperor, as represented to us by the most thoughtful expounder of Roman constitutional history.<sup>2</sup> The aspirations of philosophers, the contrivances of practical statesmen, had, at last, and for once, attained their highest realization. Here was the best man of the commonwealth choosing the next best for his child, his associate, and his successor. The union of the Licinian and Scribonian houses with the Lutatian and Sulpician proclaimed the reinstatement of the Senatorial party, as opposed to the champions of the Plebs who had so long trampled on the faction of the Optimates. But besides this class-demonstration, demanded by the position of the new dynasty, justified by the forfeiture of its rivals, the improvement now introduced on the example of Augustus, who chose a successor from his own family, not from the citizens out of doors,—the selection of a younger before an elder brother, for his personal qualifications, for an elder Piso had been passed over,—the well-known character of the adopted, his mature age, his blameless life, his constancy under adverse

This adoption made in the interest of the senate.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 14.: “Ea pars morum ejus, quo suspectior sollicitis, adoptanti placuit.”

<sup>2</sup> Of the six persons present, indeed, three at least perished immediately afterwards, and the account given us by Tacitus of the speech of Galba, and the demeanour of Piso, rests at best on popular rumour only. Tac. *Hist.* i. 15–17.: “Galba . . . in hunc modum locutus fertur . . . Pisonem ferunt” . . . language in which our author sometimes disguises a dramatic invention of his own.

fortune,—all these circumstances combined to secure for this appointment the suffrage of patriots and statesmen beyond the ranks of any single order, or any party in the nation. The problem of government was solved:—could we but shut out the recollection of what preceded, and what followed,—the usurpation by one legion and the overthrow by another,—the proof made patent to posterity that neither the creation of Galba, nor the adoption of Piso, was the work of the commonwealth itself as founded on the will of the people! Taken by itself no public act was ever more virtuous; but it had no firmer support than a fierce but unsubstantial reaction of public feeling, and its fortunes proved as baseless as its origin.

Galba conferred the empire with magnanimity; Piso accepted it respectfully and modestly, as a burden laid on him by his own order, which with him was equivalent to the commonwealth; the bystanders looked on with anxiety or envy; to the good, the innovation seemed fraught with peril, for it seemed to introduce a principle of rivalry within the walls of the palace itself; while the bad, with whom power at any price was the height of human ambition, grudged Piso his luck in having power, however precarious, thus thrust upon him. But how should this domestic arrangement be publicly ratified? what forms should be observed, what power in the state appealed to for its sanction? The association of Agrippa, and afterwards of Tiberius, with Augustus, had been rather implied by significant charges than directly submitted to the approval of the State. Galba had no reserve: his only wish, in the interest of his tottering government, was to secure the most effective recognition of the act he had accomplished. Should he, then, declare his will to the people from the rostra, and invite their acceptance? or should he call for a vote of the senate? or, lastly, should he demand the salutation of the army? A soldier himself, and raised to power by the soldiers, Galba knew where his real strength lay, and he determined to lead his destined successor to the camp, and

Galba submits  
his choice to  
the approval of  
his legions.



present him as such to his companions in arms: he might hope to engage the affections of the legions, which he sternly refused to buy with money, by a compliment to their pride. On the 10th of January the emperor carried his purpose into execution. He briefly announced his choice to the soldiers, citing the example of Augustus, and appealing to the way in which the legionaries chose recruits; but it was in a storm of rain and thunder, such as in the olden time would have deterred the magistrate from holding a public election, and—a portent more fatal and now more unusual—he accompanied the announcement with no promise of a donative. Though the tribunes, and centurions, and the first rank of the soldiers responded with the expected acclamations, the serried files behind maintained a gloomy silence, sufficiently indicative of surprise and ill-humour. The officers themselves declared that a trifling largess would have sufficed to conciliate them; but Galba was stern and immovable. It was a moment when a wise man would have temporized: but Galba, intelligent and able as he was, had no wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

His untimely  
austerity in re-  
fusing them a  
donative.

From the camp the emperor turned to the Senate-house. His address to the senators was not less curt than that to the soldiers, and was conceived perhaps in language scarcely less military. But it was followed immediately by a more graceful harangue from

The adoption  
accepted with  
satisfaction by  
the senate.

Piso; and, whatever doubt or jealousy might prevail in some sections of the assembly, on the whole the act was felt as a compliment to the order, and greeted with general approbation. The first care of the now constituted government was to send legates to control the disaffected or vacillating legions, the Fourth and the Eighteenth, on the Rhine; the next, to restore the finances of the state, and supply, with no irregular severity or injustice, the necessities of its chief, who found an empty treasury, with a hungry populace at its doors. Galba's first measure was to demand the restitution of the sums Nero had lavished on his unworthy favourites, computed to amount to

Measures for  
the punishment  
of Nero's fa-  
vourites.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 17.

twenty-two millions of sesterces, leaving them, in scorn or pity, one-tenth only of their plunder.<sup>1</sup> Thirty knights were constituted a board for the recovery of these moneys; but the inquisition, as might be expected, was not generally successful. The grantees, it was alleged, had squandered their grants as fast as they obtained them, and no assets were forthcoming to clear their debt to the public. It was some consolation that the wretches to whom Nero had given were found as poor as those from whom he had taken. Another measure was directed to secure power over the soldiers. Galba began by dismissing some of the tribunes of the prætorian and urban guard, intending, no doubt, gradually to rid himself of his least trustworthy officers; but the process was marked enough to cause alarm, while it was too slow to effect its object.<sup>2</sup> On the whole, neither the people nor the soldiers were satisfied with the new emperor's policy; but he was misled, apparently, by the counsels of Vinus, who induced him indiscreetly to spare the life of Tigellinus, when the most obnoxious of Nero's favourites were led, amid general acclamations, to the scaffold. Nothing, it is said, would have so delighted the citizens as to have seen Tigellinus dragged, like Sejanus, through the forum.

They continued to call for his head in the theatre and the circus; but Vinus had engaged to marry his daughter, a widow with a large dower, and for her sake he persuaded Galba to screen the guilty father, and proclaim that he was sinking fast under a natural disease.<sup>3</sup> Nor were the frugal soldier's habits conducive to popularity. Trifling instances of his parsimony were reported, and possibly exaggerated. He had groaned aloud when a rich banquet was served him. He had rewarded the diligence of his chamberlain with a dish of lentils. He had marked his content with a distinguished flutist by presenting him with five denarii, drawn deliberately from his own

Galba gives offence by sparing Tigellinus.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 20.; Plut. *Galb.* 16.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* l. c.: "Nec remedium in cæteros fuit, sed metus initium."

<sup>3</sup> Plut. *Galb.* 17.

pocket.<sup>1</sup> Such was the successor of the refined Augustus, and the magnificent Nero.

There was no man at Rome whose personal views were so directly thwarted by the elevation of Piso as Otho's; none felt himself so aggrieved, none was so bold, so unscrupulous, in seeking redress. Otho still smarted under the recollection of his exile; for, honourable though it was, the command of a rude and distant province, protracted through the ten best years of life, could be regarded only as an exile; and yet even this was a milder penalty than he might expect from the jealousy of his new rulers.<sup>2</sup> If Galba, with the serenity of his age and character, could venture to disregard his rivalry, he expected no such indulgence from the younger Cæsar, too sure to retaliate on a man of years and position like his own the jealousy he had himself incurred from Nero. Long steeped in every luxury, and every sensual gratification exhausted, Otho held his life cheap: he resolved, from pride and caprice, to throw the die for empire as the only excitement now remaining, conscious of all its hazard, and content to perish if unsuccessful. Such a temper was a fearful symptom of the times. In this combination of voluptuousness and daring, in fascination of manners and recklessness of disposition, in lust of place and power, and contempt for the dangers which environed them, Otho may remind us of Catilina; but, in atrocity of purpose, he stands a full step in advance, inasmuch as Catilina was impelled to treason at least by an urgent necessity, while Otho plunged into it from mere wantonness and the pleasure of the game. The excuse he pleaded could not have imposed even on himself. For a loyal subject, even though once a friend of Nero, there was no insecurity under Galba, nor need he have despaired of winning the confidence of Piso. He had gained credit for moderation in his ten years' government; a new career of

Otho, mortified at the adoption of Piso, determines to seize on the empire.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Galb.* 12.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Otho*, 3.: "Provinciam administravit quæstoribus (i. e. by civil, not military, officers), per decem annos;" i. e. from 811 (Dion, lxi. 11.) to 821.



virtue and reputation was open to him. But Otho was an elegant gambler: his virtues had been as capricious as his vices; he was weary of decorum, and now, long restrained from the gratification of his passion, he rushed back to the table with a madman's frenzy, prepared to stake his life against his evil fortune.

And Otho had other counsellors than Catilina. Instead of being the centre of a group of vicious associates, the oracle of bankrupts and prodigals, he was himself swayed by false impostors, the victim of flatterers and diviners. His wife Poppæa, who had passed him in the race of ambition, had entertained a parasitical brood of astrologers about her; Otho had yielded to the same fascinations also; and when the promise of his soothsayer Ptolemæus, that he should outlive Nero, had turned out true, he embraced with transport a second revelation, that he should become associated in the empire.<sup>1</sup> Ptolemæus himself, when he found how much his patron's imagination was inflamed, spared no means to effect the fulfilment of his own prophecy. The state of the legions in the provinces, the temper of the soldiery at Rome, alike suggested grounds of hope, and furnished objects to tamper with. The troops which Galba had led from the heart of Spain to the Tiber felt aggrieved by the length of their pilgrimage; for, stationed in their frontier camps, the legions were not often required to make distant marches, and the battalions destined for the East or the West were generally transported almost to their appointed quarters by sea. Their toils might, indeed, be recompensed, the remembrance of the dust and heat of the way might be sweetened by largesses; but Galba had stiffly refused to administer such silver salves, and they now stood, cap in hand, soliciting, by gestures if not with words, the liberality of the soldier's friend, such as Otho studied to represent himself. Accordingly, when he

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 22.; Plut. *Galb.* 23., by whom the man is called Ptolemæus. Suetonius, *Otho*, 4., gives him the name of Seleucus, which may be a confusion with the name of the soothsayer of Vespasian. *Hist.* ii. 78.

Otho tampers  
with the com-  
mon soldiers.

received the emperor at supper, his creature Mævius Pudens slipped a gratification into the hands of the guard; and to this general munificence he added lavish acts of generosity to individuals.<sup>1</sup> It is observable, indeed, that these efforts were directed to the lower ranks rather than to the officers. The tribunes and centurions were loyal to their imperator, faithful to their military oath; they were superior, perhaps, to the petty causes of discontent which moved the turbulent multitude. Nevertheless, in the general relaxation of discipline, and the confusion incident to the assemblage of various corps in the city, a movement in the ranks alone might spread with sympathetic excitement. We have often seen already how powerless were the officers against the contagion of insubordination among their men. The privates were seduced, the legion was carried over. *Two manipulars engaged to transfer the empire of the Roman people*, says Tacitus, in memorable words, *and they did transfer it.*<sup>2</sup> Murmurs at the refusal of a largess, sighs for the licence of Nero's reign, disgust at the prospect of marching again to the frontiers, ran like wildfire along the ranks; the news of the revolt in Germany shook the common faith in Galba's authority, and as early as the fourteenth of January, the fifth day from Piso's appointment, the prætorians were prepared to carry Otho to the camp at nightfall, had not their leaders feared their making some blunder in the darkness, and seizing perhaps on the wrong man in the confusion of the moment. Yet delay was dangerous; indications of the con-

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 24. According to Suetonius, Otho was so deeply involved in debt, that he declared he could not exist unless he became emperor (*Otho*, 5.): he must be cut in pieces, either by the soldiers in the field, or by his creditors in the forum. He raised many men for his desperate enterprise by selling a place about the court for a million of sesterces: "hoc subsidium tanti cœpti fuit."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 25.: "Suscepere duo manipulares Imperium pop. Rom. transferendum; et transtulerunt." "Manipulares," privates: but one was, "tesserarius," an orderly; the other, "optio," an adjutant: both picked from the ranks for special service.

spiracy were here and there escaping ; it was only the perverse jealousy of Laco, who refused to regard any suggestions which had not originated with himself, that prevented its discovery and prompt suppression.

On the morning of the fifteenth, Galba was sacrificing before the Palatine temple of Apollo, when the aruspex informed him that the entrails were inauspicious, and portended a foe in his own household. Otho was standing by. He heard the words, and smiled at their import, which corresponded with his secret designs. Presently his freedman Onomastus announced that his architect awaited him at home. The signal was preconcerted ; it implied that the soldiers were ready, and the project ripe. He quitted the emperor's presence in haste, alleging that the architect was come to inspect with him some new-purchased premises : leaning on his freedman's arm, with the air of a careless lounge, he descended through the house of Tiberius into the Velabrum, then turned to the right to the Golden Milestone beneath the Capitol in front of the Roman forum.<sup>1</sup> Here he was met by some common soldiers, three and twenty in number, who hailed him at once as imperator, thrust him into a litter, and, with drawn swords, bore him off, alarmed as he was at their fewness, across the forum and the Suburra. Passing unchallenged through the wondering by-standers, they reached the gates of the prætorian camp, where guard was kept by the tribune Martialis, who, whether privy to the plot or bewildered by the suddenness of the crisis, opened to them without hesitation, and admitted the pretender within the enclosure.

Meanwhile Galba was still sacrificing, *importuning the gods of an empire no longer his*, when the report arrived

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 27. The "house of Tiberius" was the first imperial addition to the original mansion of Augustus on the Palatine. It extended along the western side of the hill above the Velabrum. This passage shows that, as has been before suggested, there were common thoroughfares through the courts of the palace.



that some senator, his name unknown, was being hurried to the camp:<sup>1</sup> a second messenger announced that it was Otho: this man was followed by a crowd of all ranks and orders, breathlessly vociferating what they had seen or heard; but still some extenuating, like courtiers, the real magnitude of the danger. One cohort of the guard was stationed at the palace gates. It was judged expedient to ascertain first the temper of this battalion; but Galba was advised to keep out of sight and reserve his authority to the last, while Piso went forth to address it. The soldiers listened respectfully, and stood to their arms, with the instinct of discipline; but there was no clamour, no enthusiasm among them. Officers were sent in haste to secure a corps of the Illyrian army, which bivouacked in the portico of Agrippa; but they were ill-received, and even thrust back with violence. Others again sought to gain the Germanic cohorts, drafted from their legions by Nero for service in the East, and recently recalled precipitately from Alexandria. These men were better disposed towards Galba, on account of the care he had bestowed on them after their harassing voyage; nevertheless they hesitated to arm, and maintained an ominous silence. None ventured to try the disposition of the marine battalions, still resenting the slaughter of their comrades; and when three bold tribunes went resolutely to the camp of the prætorians, to dissuade them from their threatened mutiny, they were repelled with curses, and one of them disarmed by force. The emperor was deserted by his soldiers; but the populace rushed tumultuously into the palace, demanding the death of Otho, and the destruction of his associates, in the same tone of ferocious levity with which they would have called for the gladiators or the lions in the circus. Galba could derive no confidence from this empty clamour; as an old soldier he despised the nerveless mob of the streets; he still debated with Vinus and others whether to keep within

Galba is deserted by the soldiers.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 29.: "Ignarus interim Galba et sacris intentus fatigabat alieni jam imperii Deos."

doors, guarding the approaches, and give the traitors time to return to a better mind, or go forth at once to meet them, and quell the mutiny with a word and frown, or perish in arms as became a Roman general.<sup>1</sup>

Vinius urged the former course; Laco, as usual, opposed him; but assuredly Laco's counsel was the worthiest, and might well be deemed the safest. Galba, always He goes forth from the palace to meet the mutineers. it would seem irresolute, turned wistfully from one to the other, but the soldier's spirit prevailed, and he determined to act. He allowed Piso, however, to precede him to the camp. Scarce had the younger Cæsar gone than a report was circulated that Otho had been slain by the prætorians. All doubted; many disbelieved; presently men were heard to vouch strongly for the fact; they had seen it with their own eyes. The report was false, and possibly it was spread and confirmed by the usurper's adherents to draw the emperor from his palace walls, and betray him into the midst of his enemies. The artifice, if such it was, succeeded. Knights, senators, and people crowded round Galba, loudly murmuring at the disappointment of their revenge, and calling upon him to issue from the gates, and extinguish the last sparks of treason by his presence. Arrayed in a light quilted tunic, not in steel, and obliged by age and weakness to adopt the conveyance of a litter, Galba put himself at the head of the surging multitude.<sup>2</sup> One of the guards forced himself into his presence, and, waving a bloody sword, exclaimed that he had killed Otho. *Comrade*, said he, *who ordered you?* a touching rebuke which thrilled the hearts of the noblest of the citizens, and was long treasured in their memory as the true eloquence of an emperor.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 31, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Galb.* 19.: "Loricam tamen induit linteam, quanquam haud dissimulans parum adversus tot mucrones profuturam."

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 35.: "Commilito, inquit, quis jussit?" The incident is mentioned also by Suetonius, Plutarch, and Dion. It will be remembered that Augustus, the princeps and the tribune, shrank from calling the soldiers his "comrades."

By this time the revolt had gathered head within the camp. The movement was confined to the private soldiers; so, at least, we are assured; and it is almost affecting to remark the anxiety of the patriotic historian to explain that the first instance of successful mutiny at Rome was the work of the common herd, and in no sense that of their officers. Tribunes and centurions were disarmed, or kept aloof, while the crowd, without leaders and without order, moved by the common instinct of turbulent disaffection, thrust Otho between their standards fixed around the tribunal, on the very spot where a gilded image of Galba might remind them of the oath which bound them to his person. Otho himself, no longer his own master, hardly conscious perhaps of his position, stretched forth his arms to the right and left, kissing his hands towards the crowd, wherever the loudest shout resounded, *courting empire*, says Tacitus, *with the demeanour of a slave*.<sup>1</sup> He writhed under his ignominy as the puppet of a mob, and hesitated to assume the tone of command; but when the marine battalions advanced in a body, and swore fidelity to his orders, he felt himself at last an imperator, and addressed his partisans with the spirit and self-possession of their legitimate chief. The ceremony of installation was complete. Otho commanded the armouries to be opened, and the men rushed, prætorians and legionaries, Romans and auxiliaries, all mingled together, and seized the first weapons that came to hand, without distinction of rank or post in the service.

Otho proclaimed emperor in the camp.

The buzz of movement to and fro, and the discordant cries of the soldiers, penetrated from the camp into the city, and Piso, checking his first impulse to confront the mutineers in person, awaited Galba's arrival in the forum, and took his own place in the emperor's escort. The accounts now grew momentarily worse and worse; the old man seems to have lost his presence of mind,

Galba and Piso halt in the forum.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 36.: "Omnia serviliter pro dominatione." According to Suetonius (*Otho*, 6.), he said that he would accept only just as much power as they chose to leave him: "Id demum se habiturum quod ipsi sibi reliquissent."



and allowed his followers to urge on him their timid and conflicting counsels, to return to the palace, to repair to the Capitol, to occupy the rostra. Laco would have seized the opportunity to wreak his private grudge by ordering the assassination of Vinius, under pretence that he was a friend of Otho, and a traitor to the emperor; but Vinius was on his guard, the moment passed, and Galba was still surrounded by the whole body of his friends, whose only hope now lay in a spontaneous rising of the people against the soldiery.

The mutual jealousy, indeed, which had long subsisted between these two classes might still have changed the aspect of affairs. The urban populace hated the soldiery, with whom they had no family ties, and so many of whom they now saw thronging their streets as the favourites of the Cæsar, and gifted with privileges which encroached upon their comforts and galled their pride. At this moment all the populace were in the streets, or filled the basilicas and temples; their eyes turned in amazement from side to side, their ears caught at every sound; alarmed and indignant, they awaited the event in silence.<sup>1</sup> With nobles for their leaders, and armed retainers of the nobles to support them, they might have proved not unequal to a conflict even with the trained swordsmen of the legions. And Otho was assured that they were arming. No time was to be lost. With colours flying and martial music, with measured step and naked weapons, advanced the battalions under his direction to the capture of the city and the overthrow of the laws.

A single cohort still surrounded Galba, when, at the sight of these advancing columns, its standard-bearer tore the emperor's image from his spear-head, and dashed it on the ground. The soldiers were at once decided for Otho: swords were drawn, and every symptom of favour for Galba among the bystanders was repressed by menaces, till they dispersed and

Otho advances  
at the head of  
the soldiers.

Assassination  
of Galba, fol-  
lowed by that  
of Vinius and  
Piso.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 40.: "Quale magni metus et magnæ iræ silentium est."

fled in horror from the forum. At last the bearers of the emperor's litter overturned it at the Curtian pool beneath the Capitol. In a moment enemies swarmed around his body. A few words he muttered, which have been diversely reported: some said that they were abject and unbecoming; others affirmed that he presented his neck to the assassin's sword, and bade him strike, *if it were good for the republic*: but none listened, none perhaps heeded the words actually spoken; Galba's throat was pierced, but even the author of his mortal wound was not ascertained, while, his breast being protected by the cuirass, his legs and arms were hacked with repeated gashes. The murder of Galba was followed by that of Vinus, who was said to have in vain exclaimed that Otho could have no interest in his death: but there was evidently among the Romans a deep dislike to this man, and they were prone to believe in his treachery. Lastly, the noble Piso was attacked, and though, protected for a moment by the devotion of a centurion, whose fidelity is the only bright spot in this day of horrors, he made his way into the temple of Vesta, the goddess could offer no secure asylum; he was dragged forth by the instruments of Otho, under special orders to hunt him out and despatch him. The heads of all the three were brought to the victor of the day, and while he gazed with emotions of respect on Galba's, with some pity on that of Vinus, Piso's, it is said, he regarded with barbarous and unmanly satisfaction. These bloody trophies were then paraded through the streets by the brutal soldiers, many of whom thrust their reeking hands above the crowd, swearing that they had struck the first, the second, the tenth, or the twentieth blow; and when the distribution of rewards arrived, not less, we are assured, than a hundred and twenty claims were presented to the government from the pretended authors of the most notable feats of arms.<sup>1</sup> These ferocious soldiers were fully alive to their

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, who treats the story of Galba throughout with strange indifference, and almost levity, applies here a line from Archilochus (c. 27.):

political importance, and determined to insist upon it. The prætorians demanded the right of choosing their own prefects, and appointed Plotius Firmus and Licinius Proculus, while Flavius Sabinus, the elder brother of Vespasian, was nominated warden of the city.<sup>1</sup>

From our slender accounts of the emperor whose brief reign and sudden fall have been just related, we may conceive him a fine specimen of the soldier-nobles of his time, undoubtedly the finest class of Roman citizens. The men who governed the provinces, nobles by birth, senators in rank, judges and administrators as well as captains by office, represent the highest and largest training of the Roman character; for they combined a wide experience of men and affairs with the feelings of a high-born aristocracy, and the education of polished gentlemen. Long removed from daily intercourse with their more frivolous peers in the city, they escaped for the most part contamination with the worst elements of society at home; they retained some of the purity together with the vigour of the heroes of the republic; they preserved in an era of ideologists or sensualists the strength of character and manly principle which had laid the deep foundations of the Roman empire. They were conquerors, but they were also organizers; and so far, with respect at least to subjects of inferior race, they deserve to be reputed civilizers. They impressed on the mind of the Orientals a fear, upon that of the Occidentals an admiration, of Rome, which taught them first to acquiesce in the yoke, and afterwards to glory in it. These were the representatives of her moral power of whom Rome should

Galba a specimen of the soldier-noble of Rome.

ἐπὶ τὰ γὰρ νεκρῶν παρόντων, οὓς ἐμάρψαμεν ποσὶ,  
χίλιοι φονῆς ἐσμέν.

The body of Galba was consumed privately by one of his freedmen, named Argius,—it is pleasing to record these traits of class-attachment,—and the ashes laid in his family sepulchre. His villa stood on the Janiculum, and his remains are said to repose in the gardens of the Villa Pamphili. Ampère, *Hist. Rom. à Rome*, § 4.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 41–46.; Suet. *Galb.* 20.; Dion, lxiv. 6.



have made her idols, alike for the glory of their exploits and the influence of their will and character;—not the Claudii and Domitii, whom the chance of family adoption had raised to the lip-worship of courtiers and time-servers. We are tempted to gaze again and again, in the decline and decay before us, on the legitimate succession of true Roman nobility, to renew our admiration of its sense of duty, its devotion to principles of obedience and self-control, unshaken by the cavils of the schools, serving the emperor as the Genius of Discipline, worshipping all the gods after the custom of antiquity, but trusting no god but its country.

The Romans considered Galba to have lost the empire by mismanagement. After summing up his qualities,—his desire for fame, but dignified reserve in awaiting rather than seeking it, his abstinence from extortion, his private frugality, his public parsimony, the moderation of his passions, the mediocrity of his genius, the slowness and discretion of his conduct, which passed with many for wisdom, finally his freedom from vices rather than possession of virtues,—Tacitus, speaking solemnly in the name of his countrymen, declares that all men would have pronounced him fit to bear rule at Rome, had he but never ruled.<sup>1</sup> Such a judgment it is impossible for us now to question; nevertheless, there seems nothing to be said, as far as our evidence goes, against his administration, except his fatal stiffness with regard to the expected donative. The great act of his short reign, the appointment of an associate, was apparently as wise as magnanimous, and the choice, itself probably judicious, was certainly determined by no unworthy motive. It is true, however, that the character of the legionary chief was generally little fitted for rule in the city. The camp officers were rarely men of liberal minds or elevated views: though the control of a province might seem, at first sight, a proper introduction to the government of an empire, it must never be forgotten that the province was no

Galba a good  
proconsul, but  
not a good em-  
peror.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 49.: "Omnium consensu capax Imperii nisi imperasset."

more than a camp to the proconsul, and that he seldom stepped, in his administration of it, beyond the curt and rigid forms of military law. Though these stern soldiers were deeply imbued with respect for the name of the senate at a distance, they were not likely to restrain their wills in deference to it, when actually face to face. And accordingly we find that Galba, when he appointed Piso his colleague, sought the ratification of his act in the first instance, not from the senate, but from the soldiers. And if we lament, in him, an indecision at the most trying moments, such as we should not expect in one accustomed to command, we may ascribe it less to natural infirmity of character, or the timidity of old age, than to a rising consciousness that, with every qualification for governing a province, he was unequal to the burden of empire.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, no small proportion at this time of the citizens in the toga, and all the citizens under arms, were fully convinced that a chief of the legions was quite fit to be an emperor. We have seen how many pretenders to the purple started up at the moment when the world abandoned Nero. One after another the star of Galba had extinguished these lesser luminaries; but new competitors for power were ready to take their place, and had his short career been but a little protracted, Galba too would soon have been required to come forth and defend his power by arms. The next change in the succession served only to strengthen this necessity. From the moment that he stepped through an emperor's blood into the palace of the Cæsars, Otho was made aware

Otho is threatened immediately with a rival in Vitellius.

<sup>1</sup> Suetonius, who describes Galba's figure with his usual minuteness,—*"Statura fuit justa, capite præcalvo, oculis cæruleis, adunco naso,"*—adds that his feet and hands were so much distorted by gout, that he could neither wear shoes nor unroll a volume. He was also disfigured and incommoded by a large wen on his right side. At the same time he boasted of his health and strength: *ἔτι μοι μὲνός ἐμπεδόν ἐστιν*, he had said, only a few days before his death. *Galb.* 20, 21. C. Galba, the emperor's father, was deformed. See the jokes upon him by Augustus and others in Macrob. *Saturn.* ii. 4. 6.: *"Ego te monere possum, corrigere non possum."* *"Ingenium Galbæ male habitat."*

that he in his turn must fight if he would retain his newly acquired honours. It was in vain that the senate prostrated itself obsequiously before the murderer of its late champion, accepted him as emperor, and heaped upon him all the titles and functions of the sovereign power.<sup>1</sup> He turned with bitter contempt from the vile flatteries of the populace, and the acclamations with which they greeted him by the name of Otho-Nero, as if they anticipated from his accession only a renewal of the orgies of the circus and the theatres, to the heralds who followed one another in quick succession, bringing him accounts of the progress of sedition in Gaul, and the formidable attitude assumed by Vitellius, at the head of the armies of the Rhine.<sup>2</sup> The temper of this upstart, the dissolute son of one of the most profligate courtiers of the late reigns, was unfavourably known at Rome, and the prospect of a civil war, from which Galba's good fortune had saved the state, was aggravated by the personal defects of both competitors. Already the best and wisest of the citizens looked elsewhere for the saviour of the commonwealth, and augured from the vigour and discretion of Vespasian, then commanding in Palestine, that he would be the fittest man to step in between them, and wrest the prize from both.<sup>3</sup>

The best citizens already look to Vespasian.

Aulus Vitellius, whose father Lucius had been censor with Claudius, and thrice consul, was born in 768, and was now

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 47.: "Accurrunt patres, decernitur Othoni tribunitia potestas, et nomen Augusti, et omnes principum honores."

<sup>2</sup> It was to humour the populace, we may believe, that Otho himself, if we are to credit Suetonius and Plutarch, assumed, in some of his despatches, the odious name of Nero, and ordered the tyrant's statues to be restored. Tacitus only mentions that he was "supposed to have contemplated" celebrating the memory of Nero, and that some persons took upon themselves to re-erect his statues. Otho contented himself with paying that honour to Poppæa, of whom he seems to have been passionately enamoured. He contemplated also marrying Statilia, the relict of his predecessor, no doubt to strengthen his title in the estimation of the populace. Suet. *Otho*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 50.



The character  
of Vitellius.

accordingly in his 55th year, older by seventeen years than his rival Otho. His early intimacy with Tiberius at Capreæ had obtained for him a scandalous notoriety; he humoured with equal complianee the follies of succeeding Cæsars, and drove the chariot in the circus with Caius, or played dice with Claudius. Nero's favour he gained by his adroitness in combating the young prince's coyness, and insisting on his coming forward to play and sing at a public festival. Nevertheless, this unscrupulous courtier had not wholly abandoned himself to the vices and pleasures of the city. He had obtained some reputation in rhetoric and letters, and, moreover, he had served as pro-consul, and again as legatus in Africa, where he had acquired a reputation for uprightness.<sup>1</sup> At Rome, however, he had given the rein to his cupidity, or, possibly, the public voice was there more addicted to calumny. It was whispered that he had robbed some temples of their golden ornaments, and replaced them with baser metal. But his profusion, we are assured, was at least equal to his avarice, and when Galba chose him for command in Germany, his resources were so exhausted that he was obliged to leave his wife and children in a hired lodging, while he let his own handsome mansion to strangers. The Romans were astonished, it is said, at the selection, for at the moment the post was of more than ordinary importance. They surmised that he had found a powerful friend in Vinius, attached to him by their common interest in the Blue faction of the circus; or insinuated that with the jealous emperor his bad character was itself a merit.<sup>2</sup>

The combat between the troops of Vindex and Virginius

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Vitell.* 3-5.: "Singularem innocentiam præstitit." Such testimony in favour of a man who has received no quarter from ordinary history, ought to be specified. Yet it is open to us to inquire whether the "innocence" here signalized implies equity and moderation towards the provincials, or indulgence and popular manners in connexion with Roman officials, the quæstors, and pro-consular staff.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Vitell.* 3-7.

had left deep bitterness behind, though the one chief was dead, and the other had relinquished his command. The victorious legions were those of the German frontier, almost the remotest garrisons on the continent, and accordingly the furthest cut off from the sympathies of Rome and Italy. Few, indeed, of the rank and file of these armies were really Romans in birth; their cohorts, originally levied within the Alps, had long been recruited in the provinces beyond, and it was by Gaulish hands that Gaul was now for the most part defended. Still, even to natives of Narbo or Tolosa, service on the Rhine had been a distant exile; they had long sighed to exchange the winters of the North for the sunny climes, not yet forgotten, of their birth; while even the land of the Sequani or the Ædui, on which they had fought and conquered the battalions of Vindex, they regarded as foreign and hostile, and looked wistfully on its wealth as the legitimate reward of their victory. Between these regions and Italy lay the Claudian colony of Lugdunum, the inhabitants of which were devoted to the name of their patron Nero, and jealous of the rival strongholds of Augustodunum and Vesontio, recently favoured by Galba with a remission of tribute. Every rumour from Rome passed through their city, and they made use of their position to embitter, by fiction or misrepresentation, the feud between the legions, and foster jealous feelings towards the emperor of the senate.<sup>1</sup> Vitellius, as we have seen, was sent by Galba to command the army of Lower Germany. He had reached its quarters at the beginning of December. His mission really was to soothe rather than punish, and, instead of the dismissal of centurions and decimation of manipulars, with which the Lyonnese had threatened them, the soldiers found, to their surprise, that punishments were remitted, honours distributed, and the ill-treatment they had suffered through the avarice and injustice of their late chief alleviated. Thus far

Vitellius is incited to revolt by the legions in Gaul.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 51.: "Infensa Lugdunensis colonia et pertinaci pro Nerone fide, fecunda rumoribus."

Vitellius, we may suppose, carried out the instructions furnished him by Galba; but the profuseness of his liberality, with borrowed funds, seemed to betoken already ulterior designs, and he soon lent an ear to the suggestions of Al-lienus Cæcina and Fabius Valens, legates of two legions on the Rhine, who urged him to put himself at the head of a general insurrection. They flattered him with the assurance of the regard in which he was held by the soldiers, the provincials, and the citizens of Gaul; promised him the aid of Hordeonius with the troops of Upper Germany; persuaded him that the garrisons of Britain would cross the sea to join or follow him, that the subjects of Rome, far and wide, were ripe for revolt against the senate, that the empire that feeble body had ventured to confer was a shadow which would vanish in the first flash of his weapons. It was well, they added, for Virginius to hesitate. His origin was obscure; his father was a simple knight; and he might safely decline the imperium he could not securely wield. With Vitellius it was otherwise; his birth was noble, his father had been censor and thrice consul; his rank made a private station dangerous, but was not unworthy of the highest elevation.<sup>1</sup> To a man who had once admitted the idea of treason this reasoning was not without its weight. That it had been used to him at all made him an object of suspicion, and to be suspected, as the parasite of four Cæsars well knew, was a sure presage of disgrace.

The two officers above mentioned will play a considerable part in the events which are to follow. Of Cæcina's previous history we only know that Galba had advanced him, as a zealous partisan, from the quæstorship in Bætica to the command of a legion in Upper

Cæcina and Valens, partisans of Vitellius.

<sup>1</sup> The genealogists had kept pace with the ascent of the Vitellii, and had already traced them from Faunus, the legendary king of the Aborigines, and Vitellia, a Sabine divinity. Their historic celebrity, however, did not date beyond P. Vitellius, born at Nuceria, a Roman knight, procurator of Augustus, who left four sons, all of whom became magistrates and senators. Suet. *Vitell.* 1, 2.



Germany, but he had incurred the emperor's displeasure, and been subjected to a prosecution for embezzlement. The crimes of Valens had been more daring. At the head of the First legion in Lower Germany he had urged Virginius to assume the purple, and on his refusal had pretended to disclose his intrigues to Galba. By him the death of Fonteius had been effected; and, though Galba had been assured that Fonteius was a traitor, many believed that this charge also had been forged by Valens, as an excuse for ridding himself of a man who, like Virginius, had declined his treasonable suggestions. Valens now complained that his merits were not duly rewarded, and the arrival of the weak and vain Vitellius seemed to offer another opportunity of pushing forward a candidate for the purple, behind whose cloak he might himself rise to honours. For it was one of the most fatal symptoms of national decline, that unlawful ambition was not confined to the highest object, but that officers, far too low in rank and dignity to aspire to empire themselves, were eager to thrust it upon others for the lesser rewards of a subordinate.<sup>1</sup>

Vitellius still hesitated: his ideas were slow, and his spirit not equal to the conception of a great design. He was more intent on sensual gratifications than the prosecution of a higher though more criminal ambition. But meanwhile the murmurs of the soldiers were increasing, and the Treviri and Lingones, the most powerful of the states near which they were quartered, resenting the penalties Galba had inflicted on them for their leaning to the side of Nero, fanned the flame of discontent. When, on the first of January, the men were drawn up to take the oath to the emperor, the legions of the Lower province performed their duty coldly and reluctantly, but those of the Upper absolutely refused to repeat the words of their tribunes, tore down the images of Galba, and trampled them under foot. Yet such was still

Vitellius proclaimed emperor by the Germanic legions.

their sense of discipline that they insisted on the oath being administered to them in the names of *the Senate and People*, according to the usage of the republic.<sup>1</sup> The determination of the soldiers was irresistible. Four only of the centurions of the Eighteenth legion made an effort to save Galba's images, and they were seized and thrown into chains; while Hordeonius looked on without attempting to enforce his authority. The standard-bearer of the Fourth legion, which also belonged to the Upper province, was sent to Colonia Agrippina, and brought the news to Vitellius the next night at supper, of the defection of the whole Upper army from Galba. They were ready to serve the Senate and People, but they demanded another Emperor. The moment for decision had arrived. The advisers of Vitellius were prompt and clamorous, and he yielded almost passively to their instances. Presented as their leader, he was accepted with acclamations: his name was passed from mouth to mouth, while those of Senate and People ceased to be repeated at all.<sup>2</sup> The whole of the legions on the frontier combined in open revolt against the faction of Galba, and were supported by the resources, freely tendered, of the province behind them.

A military revolution had commenced. Vitellius was the emperor of the army. In assigning the offices of the imperial household, it was from the army alone that he made his appointments. His stewards, secretaries, and chamberlains, the most confidential of his ministers, were chosen, not from the freedmen of his family, but from Roman knights, officers of the prætorium; privates received money from the fiscus to buy their indulgences from the centurions.<sup>3</sup> The ferocity with which they demanded the punishment of the most obnoxious officers was approved and gratified, and the

Vitellius, with the main body of his forces, prepares to march southward in three divisions.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 55.: "Ac ne reverentiam imperii exuere viderentur, Senatus populique Rom. oblitterata jam nomina sacramento advocabant."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 56, 57.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 58.: "Vacationes centurionibus ex fisco numerat." Comp. *Ann.* i. 17.: "Hinc sævitiam centurionum et vacationes munerum redimi."

vengeance they solicited for the death of Fonteius was only half eluded by the substitution of a centurion who struck the blow for the chief of the galleys under whose orders he had acted. The man who was thus withdrawn from their fury seems to have been a Gaul by birth, though his name, Julius Burdo, shows that he was adopted into the gens of the imperial family; and he owed his life, it may be presumed, to the policy of Vitellius, anxious not to offend the provincials, whose aid he required, and by whom his forces were supplied. On the same account, no doubt, Civilis, a leader of Batavian auxiliaries, was snatched from the hands of the legionaries, and the fidelity of the light native cohorts he commanded as a separate corps was preserved to the common cause. The armies of the Rhine seem to have numbered at this time seven legions: an eighth, the Italic, was stationed at Lugdunum. The garrisons of Britain signified their adhesion to the league, and contributed perhaps some battalions to the force now preparing to descend upon Italy. But the great interests of the empire were still sacred in the eyes of the usurper, and he would not leave the frontiers defenceless. Some cohorts were to be left behind in the principal stations, and these reinforced by provincial levies. Meanwhile the armament destined for the enterprise was divided into three bodies. Valens was directed to take the route of the Cottian Alps, with the first, comprising some chosen corps of the Lower army marshalled under the eagle of the Fifth legion, amounting, with numerous cohorts of allies, to forty thousand men. Cæcina undertook to penetrate the Pennine pass; and his force, though nominally but one legion, the Twenty-first, numbered thirty thousand. The main body, led by Vitellius himself, was to follow; and this too was amply supplied with battalions of German auxiliaries. These foreigners were among the most devoted to the new emperor's fortunes. They exulted in the title of Germanicus which he was now induced to assume, as chief, not as conqueror, of the German people: perhaps they were the more delighted at his refusing to accept the hostile ap-



pellation of Cæsar.<sup>1</sup> A favourable omen contributed to raise their spirits. At the moment when Valens commenced his march southwards, an eagle, the bird of empire and of Rome, soared above the heads of the soldiers, and, unmoved by their cries, sailed majestically before them, and *marshalled them the way that they were going.*

Trèves, accustomed to the sight of the legions, received the moving masses without distrust. Metz, in its terror, made a show of opposition, which was expiated with blood. At Laon the news of the death of Galba caused no halt; but it served to remove all hesitation in the minds of the provincials, who, while they hated both Vitellius and Otho, inclined naturally to him from whose wrath they had most to apprehend. At Langres a corps of Batavi, detached from the Fourteenth legion, showed some indisposition to join. They were reduced by force of arms, some examples made, and the united armament again swept onward. Autun was commanded to furnish large supplies; its refusal might at least offer a plea for plunder; but fear counselled prompt obedience. Lyons gave its quota without reluctance.<sup>2</sup> The Italic legion was here required to join, and a single cohort of the Eighteenth was left behind in its place. Between Lyons and Vienne existed an ancient animosity. Galba had recently mulcted the one city and enriched the other. The Lyonnese now prompted

Valens advances through Gaul, and crosses the Mont Genevre.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 62.: "Nomen Germanici Vitellio statim inditum: Cæsarem se appellari etiam victor prohibuit." Suet. *Vitell.* 8.

<sup>2</sup> An apology is due, perhaps, for using the modern names of these cities. In writing the history of the Romans in Gaul at this period we have this difficulty, that the old Gaulish names of the cities had generally become disused, such as Divodurum (Metz), while the later appellations, Mediomatrici, Leuci, Treviri, Lingones, belong to neither ancient history nor modern. Tacitus still employs the circumlocution *civitas Leueorum, Lingonum*, &c. I might write *Augustodunum, Lugdunum*, or *Vienna*, but it seemed better to preserve uniformity at least on the same page. It will be observed that I generally adopt the modern names of rivers rather than the ancient, because use has sanctioned it, and in fact they are in most cases identical in origin, and only vary in pronunciation.

the Vitellian soldiers to avenge their injuries on their more favoured neighbours. The Viennese, in consternation, came forth in the garb of suppliants, and, by a bribe, it was said, administered skilfully to Valens, obtained an indulgent hearing. But Valens himself was obliged in turn to bribe his own soldiers, by a largess of three hundred sesterces to each. At every place indeed where he halted his devouring legions, and at every place which he was induced to pass without halting, this rapacious chief required to be gratified with money, under threats of plunder and conflagration. His line of march from Vienne lay through the country of the Allobroges and Vocontii, and so by the well-trodden pass of the Mont Genève into Italy.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the other stream of invasion was descending through the country of the Helvetii, a people fiercer and more brave than the long pacified western Gauls, and not yet aware of the death of Galba, whose name was still remembered perhaps with respect in the valleys of the Rhone and Drance.<sup>2</sup> The licence Cæcina allowed his soldiers was here fiercely resented, and the course of the expedition was tracked with blood and fire, while the Roman garrisons in Rhætia were invited to attack the natives in the rear. Driven from fastness to fastness, the Helvetii made their last defence behind the walls of Aventicum, and yielded only to the threat of a regular siege, of storm, sack, and slaughter. Cæcina was now satisfied with the execution of their leader, Julius Alpinulus, and left the other captives to be dealt with by Vitellius at his leisure.<sup>3</sup> The poor people were allowed to send a deputation

Cæcina marches through the country of the Helvetii, and over the Great St. Bernard.

<sup>1</sup> The mention of Lucus Augusti or Luc indicates the route taken by this division of the Vitellians, which must have crossed from the Drôme to the Durance, and so by Embrun to the Col. Genève. Tac. *Hist.* i. 62-66.

<sup>2</sup> Sulpidius Galba, the legatus of Cæsar and conqueror of the Seduni, was the emperor's great-grandfather. Suet. *Galb.* 3.

<sup>3</sup> Aventicum, the modern Avenches. Tac. *Hist.* i. 67-70. Its sufferings were afterwards repaid by the foundation of a colony under Vespasian. The pretty but, unfortunately, spurious epitaph on Julia Alpinula—"Exorare patris necem non potui," &c.—refers to this event.

to the emperor; but he gave them a harsh reception, while his soldiers furiously threatened them: they obtained grace at last through the artful eloquence of Claudius Cossus, one of their number, who swayed the feelings of the multitude to compassion, not less boisterously expressed than their recent anger.

While this double invasion, like that of the Cimbri and Teutones of old, was thus beetling on the summits of the Alps, Otho was preparing to receive it with alertness and intrepidity. Bounding from his voluptuous couch at the first sound of the trumpet, cheerful at the sight of danger as he had been anxious and desperate amidst luxuries and honours, his first aim was to secure the good wishes of the best men, by sacrificing the detested Tigellinus, and releasing Celsus, a trusty adherent of Galba, whom he had saved before from his own soldiers and reserved perhaps with a view to the crisis which had now arrived. Here was an example of pardon for the past, and hope also of pardon for the future. The Vitellians, it proclaimed, need not despair: let them repent of their revolt and resume their allegiance to the chief of the state, accepted by the Senate and People. The emperor deigned to make overtures of conciliation to Vitellius himself. He addressed him with more than one letter, in which, with fair words and flattery, he offered him money and favour, and any tranquil retreat he might himself select for the enjoyment of ease and luxury in a private station.<sup>1</sup> Vitellius too, on his part, was equally timid, or equally politic, and several messages of compliment passed between the rivals, while each was determined,—for one, at least, his own officers had determined,—to abide the issue of a contest. Meanwhile on either side secret emissaries were employed to tamper with the adherents of the opposite party. Valens tried to shake

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 74. Suetonius goes further, and affirms that Otho “offered himself” as colleague to Vitellius, and proposed to marry his daughter. *Otho*, 8. Dion says that he proposed to accept Vitellius as his own colleague. *lxiv.* 10.



the devotion of the prætorians to Otho, by representing his own emperor as the first proclaimed, and their chief as a mere intruder : but these attempts had no success either in Rome or in Gaul ; men's minds were everywhere prepared for battle, and would not be disappointed of the slaughter, and the spoil or confiscation which might be expected to follow.

During the advance of the invaders from the North, the news of Otho's accession had flown fast into the East, and even in the West it had out-stripped the heralds of Vitellius. The troops in Illyricum were the first, as they were the nearest, to accept the appointment of Otho, and this accession of force gave him considerable confidence. Mucianus from Syria, Vespasian from Palestine, announced the adhesion of their legions to the choice of the capital ; the oath of fidelity was repeated without dissent along the whole coast of Africa, Crescens, a freedman of Nero, leading the way at Carthage, and presuming to anticipate the proconsul's decision. Cluvius Rufus, who commanded in one of the provinces of Spain, reported that the troops throughout the peninsula would prove faithful to the murderer of Galba ; but suddenly it was found that they had declared for Vitellius. Julius Cordus administered the oath in Aquitania ; but here again the emissaries of Vitellius succeeded in bringing the soldiers over to their own side. The Narbonensis naturally embraced the Gaulish faction, overawed by the proximity of its formidable armies. Thus the legions throughout the whole Roman world stood to arms ; the civil functionaries, the citizens, the provincials, and lastly the allies and tributaries followed the impulse of the soldiery, and were prepared, by force of habit, if not from personal inclination, to yield them the support they required. This universal movement of civil strife was primarily a military one ; but in every quarter the people were ranged, as far as they could render service, on the side chosen by their presidiary troops. In fact the population generally throughout the empire, disarmed, unwarlike, and accustomed to look on the armed soldier as the appointed ar-

The legions  
and provinces  
range them-  
selves on one  
side or the oth-  
er.

biter of its destinies, had now lost whatever independence of choice or power of action it may once have claimed to exercise in questions of imperial policy.<sup>1</sup>

It was among the first cares of Otho's government, so to order the succession of consuls for the year as to secure him friends without increasing the number of his enemies. The death of Galba and Vinius left both chairs vacant, and so, in the confusion of the times, they seem to have remained to the end of February. To maintain the dignity of the imperial office, as well as to give to it, as it were, the sanction of the senate, Otho named himself and his brother Titianus consuls for March and April; Virginus was appointed to succeed in May, a compliment to the Gaulish legions which Galba had jealously withheld, with Vopiscus, who was connected with the colony of Vienna, for his colleague. The other consulships for the year, two months being often at this period a common term of office for each pair, were confirmed to the personages whom Galba, or even Nero before him, had already designated. Priesthoods and augurships were bestowed on veteran dignitaries, who had passed the age for more laborious occupations, and the children of deceased exiles were compensated for their sufferings by the restoration of honours forfeited by their fathers. Many representatives of noble houses were thus readmitted to the senate, and some who had been punished under Nero for malversation in their provinces were pardoned, as though they too had been innocent victims of an indiscriminate tyranny. Such were the new emperor's measures for conciliating the nobles. At the same time he issued edicts in rapid succession for the gratification of the provincials, whose fidelity it seemed most important to secure, among whom were the people of Bætica in Spain, and the Lingones in Gaul. The rumour that he contemplated celebrating Nero's memory as a boon to the populace at Rome was probably an invention of his enemies.<sup>2</sup>

Measures of  
Otho's govern-  
ment.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 76-78.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 77, 78.; Plutarch, *Otho*, 3.

We may believe, however, that great jealousy of the senate pervaded both the populace and the soldiers. The senators were reputed Galba's friends: they had chosen him of their own free will; but Otho they had only accepted. The soldiers had created the present emperor, and they were ready to believe that the senators were intriguing against him. A cohort stationed at Ostia happened to be summoned to the city; its equipments were to be conveyed in waggons for distribution to the men in their new quarters; but this was done by chance at night, and in an unusual way; and suddenly the men took alarm, conceived a notion that their arms were to be taken from them to furnish a band of senatorian conspirators, and, seizing horses, rushed tumultuously to Rome, and penetrated to the gates of the palace. Otho at the moment was entertaining a party of nobles: the soldiers stormed at the gates, without a leader, without a banner, exclaiming that they were come to protect their emperor from the designs of his treacherous parasites. The guests were in consternation: the first impulse on their part was to apprehend treachery from their host. When he desired them to withdraw, they made their way as they best could to their homes: scarcely had they quitted the chamber before the doors were burst in, and the furious mob demanded Otho to be presented to them. Some officers they wounded, others they threatened, till the emperor himself leaped upon a couch, and from thence, regardless of the military indecorum, expostulated and reasoned with his manipulars. With great difficulty they were persuaded to return to their quarters. The next day the alarm had penetrated through the whole city; houses were shut, the streets were deserted; the people were in dismay, the soldiers anxious and uneasy. The prefect finally composed the disturbance by promising a largess of five thousand sesterces to each of the mutineers; after which Otho ventured to enter their quarters, and, with the support of their officers, demanded two only of the most violent for punishment. The current of feeling, already checked by the

Otho's soldiers  
suspect the  
senators of  
treachery.



promised donative, was completely turned by this show of moderation, and the soldiers congratulated themselves on the magnanimity of their leader, who could thus temper justice with mercy.<sup>1</sup>

The spirits of Otho himself were roused by the perils of the crisis, and he displayed activity, vigour, readiness, and decision, which no doubt amazed the men who had known him hitherto only as a showy profligate. But all other classes were paralyzed with alarm. The senators, made thus rudely sensible of the soldiers' feelings toward them, became more servile to the emperor, more profuse in their adulation, more vehement in denouncing his enemy; yet all the while they knew that Otho, so lately one of themselves, was not deceived by this show of devotion, and apprehended that he was storing up an account of vengeance, whenever he should be free to direct against them the fury of the soldiers which he was now nursing against the adversary in the field.<sup>2</sup> The people were disturbed by a thousand terrors, real and imaginary. They heard that Vitellians were among them, intriguing with both the citizens and the soldiers; they distrusted every report, whether of successes or disasters; they were scared by the rumour of prodigies, the dropping of the reins from the hands

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 80–82.; Plutarch, *Otho*, 3.; Dion, lxiv. 9. That the senate was really hostile to Otho there can be no doubt. It was both alarmed and mortified by the way in which, while pretending to rely on its authority, he coquetted with the soldiers and the populace.

It is well known that few, if any, genuine specimens of a brass (senatorial) coinage of this emperor exist; and this has been supposed to indicate that that body, in its ill-will to him, refused to stamp his name and countenance. Eckhel, after refuting this and other explanations of the fact, acknowledges that he can offer no probable solution of it. It is allowed, however, that there are a great number of brass Galbas extant; and I would suggest, that as the senate, perhaps in the excess of its zeal for the destroyer of Nero, made a large issue of this coinage, there would be little opportunity for a fresh mintage during the few months of Otho's power. It may be observed, moreover, that the Vitellian brasses also are comparatively rare. See Eckhel, *Doct. Numm.* vi. 305.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 85.: "Et privato Othoni nuper, atque eadem dicenti, nota adulatio."

of a marble Victory, the turning of Cæsar's statue from west to east; and finally, a terrible inundation of the Tiber seemed an omen of worse disasters. When the force of the waves, which had undermined many houses, was abated, they still kept possession of the Campus and the Flaminian Way; and it was remarked as an evil augury that when Otho first led his cohorts out of the city, he was impeded in his march northward by the waters themselves, or by the ruins they had created.<sup>1</sup>

While the Priests and Flamens, the Salii and the Vestals, with the mighty mob of Rome in their train, conducted a lustral procession round the pomærium, the emperor was meditating the plan of his campaign, with the view of turning the flank of the invaders already hovering on the Alps. The naval force at Ostia was warmly attached to him, for he had caressed the remnant of Nero's marines after the chastisement they had suffered from Galba, constituting them a regular corps for the land service, which was reputed more honourable than their own. The men now to be employed on board ship might hope for similar advancement; for it was Otho's plan to equip an armament first for the recovery of the Narbonensis, and eventually for operations in the rear of the Vitellian expedition.<sup>2</sup> Some city cohorts and some battalions of the guard were added to the marine force; on the latter especial reliance was placed, and their officers were employed to watch the emperor's generals not less than to assist them. Nothing indeed showed more clearly the precariousness of Otho's position than the precautions he was obliged to take against the very men whom he charged with his defence. Though he enjoyed the services of Suetonius, the greatest captain of the times, together with other men of vigour and conduct, he deemed it necessary to set Proculus, the præto-

Otho's distrust  
of his own officers.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 86.; Plut. *Otho*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> The expression of Tacitus, "spe honorationis in posterum militiæ," is the same as that of Livy, xxxii. 23.; from which it appears that the legionary service was considered of a higher grade than the marine.

rian prefect, a mere policeman without military experience, as a spy over them, with instructions to foment their jealousies and secure their fidelity to himself by divisions among one another. Finally, a freedman, named Oseus, seems to have been set as a spy over Proculus.<sup>1</sup>

But Otho was too active and high-spirited himself to trust entirely to his marines or his soldiers, to his generals or his freedmen. He led his land forces in person, and required the magistrates and the consulars to attend him, not as combatants, for which many of them by age and habit were unfit, but as companions, in order to secure their persons and remove them from the city. Otho indeed was studiously mild in the treatment even of those whose intrigues he had most reason to apprehend. He was satisfied with commanding Lucius, a brother of Aulus Vitellius, to accompany him to the field, treating him with the same courtesy as others. It is pleasant also to read, as an unusual feature in civil war, that he extended his protection to his opponent's children, who were left in the city, and whom their father had no means of protecting but by a threat of reprisals on Titianus, Otho's brother, for Otho himself was wifeless and childless. But, surrounded as he was by a gay and unwarlike nobility, vain of the softness of their manners, of their beauty, their dress, and their equipments, the emperor himself, long known as a mere dissolute fop, suddenly threw off the habits of his past life, and embraced without a murmur all the austerities of service; clad in steel, unwashed, uncombed, he marched on foot at the head of his columns, as if to belie beforehand the sarcasm of the satirist, that he waged a civil war with a mirror in his knapsack.<sup>2</sup> His forces indeed were slender, consisting chiefly of the prætorians and marines, and his preparations had probably been retarded by want of money, while the population suf-

Otho marches  
at the head of  
his troops.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Contrast the description in Tacitus, *Hist.* ii. 11.: "horridus, incomptus, famæque dissimilis," with the well-known sarcasm of Juvenal, ii. 103.:

"Speculum civilis sarcina belli."



ferred from the seizure of all the specie that could be collected, and it was now too late to occupy the passes of the Alps and confine the Vitellians to the Gaulish provinces. Cæcina had entered the Cisalpine, and Valens was hastening to join him; but Otho's fleet had thrown garrisons into the strong places along the coast-road, and four legions were advancing with rapid strides from Illyricum, to turn the head of the Adriatic. Five cohorts of prætorians, some squadrons of cavalry, and a body of two thousand gladiators, were sent forward to seize the fords and bridges of the Po; and the Othonians hoped to choose their own positions in the plains on which the enemy was to be met, and the empire to be lost or won.<sup>1</sup>

While the main forces on both sides were converging from many quarters to the centre of the Padane valley, the skirmishes which occurred elsewhere were of little real importance. Otho's fleet, after provoking by wanton plunder the natives of the Ligurian coast, began to harass the shores of Gaul, and Valens was induced by the cries of the Foro-julians to detach some cohorts for their protection. Troops were landed from the vessels, and various actions took place with no serious result. Corsica was easily persuaded to side with the masters of the sea; but its governor was at private feud with Otho, and tried to secure it for Vitellius. His efforts were nearly crowned with success, but the people rose at last against him, put him to death, and sent his head, in token of their fidelity, to Otho, who, however, was too much occupied with greater matters to reward or acknowledge it.<sup>2</sup>

Operations of  
Otho's fleet on  
the Ligurian  
coast.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 12-15. After the event it was objected that Otho had set out too precipitately: "expeditionem impigre atque etiam præpropere inchoavit." Suet. *Otho*, 8. Evil auspices of course were recorded, and it was particularly remarked that he had neglected to make the solemn display of the Ancilia, without which no military enterprise had ever succeeded. The month of March was appointed for this ceremony, after which, accordingly, the military season commenced. See the commentators on Suetonius. Otho set out on the day of Cybele, the 24th of March (ix. kal. April).

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 16. *Agric.* 7.

By the time that Otho's forces arrived on the southern bank of the Po, the Transpadane region westward of the Addua, the most flourishing district of Italy as it was regarded in the time of Tacitus, had fallen into the hands of the Vitellians. A few flying squadrons of Othonians, which had crossed the river, had been cut off by the invaders.<sup>1</sup> The Vitellians were elated with this success, and their Batavian horse dashed into the stream, and secured an easy passage for Cæcina's foremost columns. Placentia, a place of strength, was held for Otho by Vestricius Spurinna. At first he was unable to restrain the impetuosity of his men, who rushed of their own accord to meet the enemy; but the labour of digging the trenches for their encampment at night damped the ardour of this indolent police, and as Cæcina advanced they retreated hastily behind their walls. The Vitellians, on their part, disdained to form a regular siege; the contempt in which the veterans held Otho's marines and gladiators, urged them to rush to the assault. In the course of this attack the amphitheatre outside the city, the largest building of the kind in Italy, but constructed apparently of wood, was consumed by fire, which the Placentians ascribed to the spite of some of their own neighbours. However this may be, the assault was unsuccessful, and Cæcina was obliged to withdraw beyond the Po, to await the arrival of Valens, who was retarded by insubordination in his camp, and by the necessity of detaching a part of his forces for the defence of the Narbonensis. The Othonians meanwhile collected in greater strength, and, having crossed the river at a lower point, established themselves at Bedriacum, at the junction of the Oglio and the Chiese, commanding the road from Cremona to Verona on the one side, and Mantua on the other. The temper of the troops about to be opposed to each other differed considerably. On the Vitellian side the two leaders were thoroughly earnest in their enterprise; they were

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 17.: "Capta Pannoniorum cohors apud Cremonam. Intercepti centum equites ac mille classici inter Placentiam Ticinumque."

engaged in a revolt beyond hope of pardon, and success was necessary for them; but their forces could much less be relied on, formed as they were by the union of many nations under one banner, with no personal interest in their chiefs or their party, and little else to animate them but the natural ferocity of trained swordsmen, and the lust of plunder. It was difficult to maintain their discipline, and every day relaxed the bands of their obedience. Otho's soldiers, on the other hand, were inspired by very different motives. The prætorians had to defend an emperor of their own choice; to maintain their sudden claim to bestow the purple; to retain their prescriptive right to favours and largesses; to acquire a reputation in the field, and throw off the degrading name of a mere police. The gladiators were emulous of the fame of the legionaries: the legionaries of Illyricum thirsted to measure swords with the conquerors of Germany and Britain. But, ardent as they were for the fight, their want of discipline and mutual confidence caused great disquietude to the old soldiers their commanders. Suetonius was dismayed at the rawness of the levies he was expected to lead to victory, and urged delay.<sup>1</sup> His colleagues, however, Marius Celsus, Proculus, and Gallus, shrewd competitors for Otho's favour, were jealous of him and of one another. The emperor could only settle their disputes by calling Titianus from the city, and placing him over them all; and thus assured of at least one faithful officer, and wearied with the discord of those around him, he impatiently waived all cautious counsels, and gave the signal for attack.<sup>2</sup>

It is no reflection on Otho's courage that he abstained from leading his own armies. He was conscious that he had no military experience, yet the imperator of the  
legions could not yield the place of general to a Battle of Bedriacum.

<sup>1</sup> Besides the chief in command, there was another Suetonius in the Othonian army, tribune of the Thirteenth legion. This was Suetonius Lenis, the father of the biographer of the Cæsars, who has himself recorded the fact, adding that he derived from him some interesting particulars of the emperor's last hours. Suet. *Otho*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 33.



lieutenant in the field. He retired to Brixellum, on the right bank of the Po, to receive the fresh troops which were rapidly arriving, and organize them for the campaign; but he left his legates to fight the battle which he hoped would decide it at a blow. This division, however, of forces, which were not too numerous to be kept together in one body, still more this retirement of the chief himself from the head of his own army, seems to have been fatal to the cause. The men were disturbed and discouraged, and the movements of their leaders became more than ever vacillating and uncertain. Against the advice of Suetonius, Proculus and Titianus insisted on advancing from Bedriacum; they fixed their camp at the fourth milestone on the road to Cremona, but pleading the urgent commands of Otho himself, they marched sixteen miles further, to the confluence of the Po and the Addua. Their object seems to have been to interrupt the operations of Cæcina, who was throwing a bridge across the Po, with the intention, apparently, of outflanking them, and attacking Otho at Brixellum. A parley took place between him and some of their officers: it was interrupted by an order from Valens to attack; the Vitellians issuing from their camp were severely handled; again they recovered themselves, and the Othonians in their turn suffered from the indecision or the treachery of their leaders. On a false report that the Vitellians had abandoned their emperor, they grounded arms, and saluted them as friends: undeceived by a fiercer onset, they defended themselves with desperation, but with little order, here and there, in the groves and vineyards, by groups or maniples. Those who retained their footing on the causeway kept more solid array; here there was no distant fighting with arrows or javelins; even the pilum was thrown aside, and the opposing bands, rushing furiously together, thrust with the shield, and smote with the sword, till the ground was gained or lost by sheer strength of arm and courage. The vicissitudes of the fray were rapid, various, and indecisive. While numbers remained equal, valour and strength were equally balanced.

But suddenly Otho's generals lost heart and fled. At the same moment the Vitellians were supplied with reinforcements; they charged with redoubled vigour, and broke the ranks of their disconcerted opponents. The smooth straight road tempted the worsted battalions to flight, and, hotly pressed and cut up as they fled,—for none cared to capture men who could not be sold as slaves,—they hurried without a rally towards Bedriacum. Suetonius and Proculus had already passed straight through the lines, nor halted to attempt their defence. Titianus and Celsus exerted themselves with more spirit to stop the fugitives, and rallied a handful of men under the shelter of the entrenchments, which they closed and guarded through the night. The Vitellians drew up at the fifth milestone, that is, when they came in sight of the Othonian camp, which they were not furnished with engines to assault: they lay down to rest on the spot, without pausing to fortify themselves; and the Othonians were too weary or too terrified to molest them. The next morning the beaten army treated for a capitulation; their envoys were favourably received, and the gates were immediately opened. The soldiers fell sobbing into one another's arms; friends and brothers tended each other's wounds. All denounced in common the wickedness of civil war; some even returned to the field to bury the bodies of their fallen kinsmen; but the feelings of religion or humanity extended to a few only, and the greater number of the dead long lay uncared for.<sup>1</sup>

Otho awaited the result of the battle at Brixellum with a mind equally composed to good or evil tidings. The first uncertain rumours of defeat were confirmed by the fugitives from the field, and great as the disaster was, it may be supposed that they rather

Defeat of the  
Othonians.

Otho declines  
to continue the  
contest, and  
commits sui-  
cide.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 41–45. Plutarch, who seems to have followed Tacitus, or at least to have used the same authorities, remarks on the great number of the slain, because none were interested in making prisoners. He had himself traversed the battle-field, and been told by one who had shared the fortunes of the beaten army, of the lofty pile of corpses which was raised upon it. Plut. *Otho*, 14.

enhanced than extenuated it. Nevertheless the legions which had not been engaged were not dismayed at the occurrence. Without waiting for the emperor's exhortation, they thronged of their own accord around him, and urged him to prove their valour in the recovery of his fortunes. Plotius Firmus, the prefect of the prætorians, seconded their clamorous importunities. He showed how strong the resources of their party still were, and pointed to the legions which were even now advancing to join them, which had already announced their arrival at Aquileia, and declared the courage which animated them. A common soldier drew his sword in the emperor's presence, and exclaiming, *This is the devotion which animates us all*, plunged it into his own bosom.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that Otho was possessed of ample means for continuing the contest. But he had determined otherwise. His life had been a feverish pursuit, first of pleasure, and afterwards of power. Under the influence of a vivid imagination guided by vulgar delusions, not by personal judgment or experience, he had aspired to the heights of human happiness, first in the arms of gorgeous beauty, and again in the purple robe of imperial sovereignty. He had waked from both his dreams almost at the moment when he seemed to realize them; and these visions, as they flitted away from him, left him sobered, but not embittered, disenchanted but not cynical. The world, he was now convinced, was not worth the fighting for: success and victory, fame and honour, were not worth the fighting for: his own life was not worth the fighting for. The sentiment of the noble voluptuary, that they who have enjoyed life the most are often the most ready to quit it, whatever we may think of its justice in general, was never more conspicuously fulfilled than in this example.<sup>2</sup> It is pleasant to believe that the last

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lxiv. 11.; Plut. *Otho*, 15.; Suet. *Otho*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Byron's *Mazeppa*:—

“And strange to say, the sons of pleasure,  
They who have revelled beyond measure  
In beauty, wassail, wine and treasure,



thoughts of this misguided spirit were for the peace of his country and the safety of his friends, to whom he counselled submission. After refusing to allow a renewal of the contest, after providing as he best could for the bloodless recognition of the emperor whom fortune had designated, congratulating himself that he had set an example of clemency, in sparing the family of Vitellius, which the victor for very shame must follow, Otho laid himself calmly on his couch. A tumult arising outside his tent, in which Virginius was threatened with violence, together with others of the senators, who at their master's bidding were leaving the camp, he rose, and with a few words rebuked and allayed the wrath of his fanatical adherents. As evening closed he called for a cup of water, and for two daggers, of which he chose the sharpest, and laid it under his pillow. At the same time he ordered his attendant to quit the place, and show himself to the soldiers, lest he should be charged, in their intemperate fury, with the deed he was about himself to perpetrate. Assured at last that his friends had got beyond the lines, he lay down, and slept for some hours. At break of day he drew forth his weapon, placed it to his heart, and threw his weight upon it. Nature demanded one groan. The slaves and freedmen in the outer chambers rushed trembling to his side, and with them the prefect Plotius. Otho lay dead with a single wound. He had made one request only, that his body might be consumed immediately, to escape the indignity of exposure and decollation. The prætorians crowded, with shouts and tears, to support the bier, kissing the gaping wound and the hanging hands. The pyre was heaped, and the noble remains laid upon it, and when the flames were kindled some of the soldiers slew themselves on the spot. This barbarous example kindled the emulation of the legionaries, and at Bedriacum, at Placentia, and in other camps, it found many desperate imitators. Finally a modest monument was raised over the em-

Die calm, and calmer oft than he  
Whose heritage was misery."

peror's ashes, such as the conqueror himself would scarcely grudge to an honourable opponent.<sup>1</sup>

Then once again was the empire offered by the soldiers to Virginius, and again did the veteran refuse it. Neither would he undertake, as they next requested him, to confer with Valens and Cæcina on the terms of an arrangement that might satisfy both parties. He judged the cause of Otho and his friends as hopeless as it was unjust, and he would not consent to act in its behalf. They drew their swords, but he was firm in his refusal, and at last only escaped at the back of his tent from their fury. Thus baffled, the troops at Brixellum promised their unconditional submission to the victorious generals, while Flavius Sabinus, the brother of Vespasian, whom Otho had distinguished with high marks of favour, sent the cohorts he commanded to the camp of the Vitellians.<sup>2</sup> Of the senators whom Otho had carried to the seat of war his soldiers were not less jealous than himself, and after the rout of Bedriacum, the troops which attended or guarded them at Mutina, not crediting the account of their chief's disasters, watched them with redoubled vigilance, and at last, when the news was confirmed, scarcely refrained from wreaking their spite upon them. Nor did these unfortunate nobles run much less risk at the hands of the Vitellians, who believed that they had cheered the resistance, and delayed the surrender of their opponents; and this risk was heightened by the imprudence of the decurions of the town, in still offering arms and money, and styling them Conscrip̄t Fathers;

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 47-50.; Plut. *Otho*, 15-18.; Suet. *Otho*, 10-12.; Dion, lxiiv. 11-15. Otho wanted eleven days to complete his 37th year; his reign had lasted ninety-five days: born 28th April, 785, he died 17th April, 822. See Baumgarten-Crusius on Suetonius, c. 11., who explains the apparent error of his author: "tricessimo et octavo ætatis anno." Martial expresses the common sentiment of admiration for this Roman end, vi. 32:—

"Sic Cato dum vixit, sane vel Cæsare major:  
Dum moritur, numquid major Othone fuit?"

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 51.

still more by the daring fiction of a freedman of Nero named Cænus, who at the last moment spread the report of a fresh victory over the invaders.

At Rome in the meantime there was no hesitation, no conflict of opinion. The games of Ceres were being performed in the theatre, and the populace was intent only on the amusement of the hour, when it was announced that Otho was dead, and the præfect Sabinus had required the soldiers in the city to swear to Vitellius. The name of the new emperor was received at once with acclamations, and the people, streaming forth, seized the images of Galba, and bore them crowned with flowers and laurels to the temples, and to the spot where his blood had fallen, which they heaped with chaplets. Such of the senators as were still at home met immediately, and decreed to Vitellius by a single act all the honours and titles which had been dealt out from year to year to his predecessors. Thanks were voted to the Germanic legions. Valens was praised for his dispatches, which affected moderation and respect, but the senators were really more grateful to Cæcina, who had proved his respect by not addressing them at all. Having thus done all in their power to conciliate their new master, they still awaited his arrival with anxiety; for amply as they had satisfied his desires, it might not be in his power to control his terrible soldiery, and visions of plunder, of confiscation or massacre, rose before the eyes of a generation to which the civil wars of Rome were matter of history. The fate which Rome might fear at a distance alighted actually on many districts of Italy; for the fierce warriors of the north, Romans only in name, who had scented their quarry from the Rhine, now fell without remorse on the burghs and colonies. Valens and Cæcina were too criminal, or too ambitious themselves, to check this brutal licentiousness. The soldiers of Otho, it was said, had exhausted Italy; but it was desolated by the ruffians of Vitellius.<sup>1</sup>

The senate accepts Vitellius as emperor with acclamation.

The Italian cities plundered by Vitellius.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 55, 56.



Meanwhile Vitellius had been collecting his troops in Gaul, or advancing leisurely in the rear of his legates, indulging at this crisis of his affairs the natural indolence of his disposition, sluggish and indifferent, without pride or ambition, with no thought beyond the morrow, yet all the more subject to be worked on by cool intriguers and led into sudden excesses of cruelty or violence. He carried with him eight thousand of the levies which had been destined to reinforce the army in Britain, besides the strength of the Gallic and Germanic legions. Scarcely had he put himself in motion, when the news of the victory at Bedriacum and the death of Otho reached him. At the same time the accession of the Mauretanian provinces was announced, an increase of military strength amounting to nineteen cohorts and five squadrons of horse, together with a numerous corps of native auxiliaries. About the events by which this advantage accrued to him, the rising of the prætor Albinus for his rival, the frustration of this man's attempt on Spain, his flight and slaughter, Vitellius made no inquiry: he was too thoughtless to pay attention to the details of his affairs. He descended the gentle current of the Saône in a barge, while his troops marched along the bank; though secure of his conquest, he did not all at once assume the pomp of sovereignty. He had quitted Rome a bankrupt; and he was returning poor and squalid as he came; till Junius Blæsus, the præfect of the Lugdunensis, a man of wealth and magnificence, invested him with the ensigns of empire. Vitellius seems to have felt this officious zeal as a slur on his own torpidity, and resented rather than approved it. At Lugdunum he was met by Valens and Cæcina, together with the chiefs of the conquered party. Now at last he awoke, and understood that he was actually emperor. From his tribunal he distributed thanks and praises, and commanded the army to salute his infant son as heir to the purple. He associated the child in his own title of Germanicus.<sup>1</sup> Some cruel executions followed, and the

Vitellius advances through Gaul into Italy.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 59. It must be remarked, however, that Galeria, the wife

Illyrian legions, which had ranged themselves on the side of Otho, were exasperated by the slaughter of more than one of their officers. The dissensions between the various corps grew daily wider. Suetonius and Proculus sought to secure the conqueror's regard by alleging their own treachery to Otho, which he affected to believe, and after some delay and contumelious treatment, pretended to receive them into favour. Titianus was pardoned, ostensibly from respect for his fraternal affection; at all events he deserved well for his forbearance towards Galeria and her children. Marius Celsus was suffered to retain the consulship. The vengeance of Vitellius, by whatever motives it was influenced, fell generally upon lesser victims.<sup>1</sup>

Feelings, indeed, of sympathy for human suffering, or respect for human life, were as alien from Vitellius as from his class generally. On the removal of so large a portion of the Roman garrisons, a Gaul named Maricus, raised a revolt among his countrymen. He pretended to be a god, immortal and invulnerable. But he was captured and given up by the Ædui, and ruthlessly cast forth to be devoured in the arena. When by some chance the beasts refused to touch him, and his trembling votaries were almost reassured, Vitellius looked on coolly while a gladiator despatched him. But he was too careless, it would appear, to grasp at money, and for money the massacres of the civil wars had generally been perpetrated. Vitellius not only spared his enemies' lives, but allowed the

Vitellius generally indulgent towards his enemies.

of Vitellius, had been left behind at Rome with her children, while another son by a former wife, Petronia, named Petronianus, was grown up at this time, if still alive. Suetonius, indeed, says that Vitellius had murdered him (*Vitell.* 6.); but whether this be true or not, there seems to be some mistake in the statement of Tacitus.

<sup>1</sup> Suetonius assures us (c. 10.) that Vitellius put to death a hundred and twenty persons who were found, from papers discovered in Otho's hands, to have claimed a reward for the slaughter of Galba. The most distinguished victim of this revolution was a Dolabella, who was charged with attempting to revive Otho's faction in his own behalf. He was slain, under atrocious circumstances, at Interamnium. See Tac. *Hist.* ii. 63, 64.

wills of such as had fallen in the field to take effect for the benefit of their relations. His interests seemed to centre in the gratification of an inordinate gluttony, and as he marched slowly along, all Italy, from sea to sea, was swept for delicacies for his table. If he did not confiscate his enemies' estates to lavish them on his followers, he allowed his followers to indemnify themselves by plundering enemies or friends. Even after the harvests reaped by two preceding armies, enough, it seems, remained to satisfy a third, to generate a complete relaxation of discipline, and impress the soldier with avowed contempt for his emperor. The edicts Vitellius sent before him were sufficiently moderate. He waived for the present the title of Augustus, and positively refused that of Cæsar. He ordered the diviners, the favourites and accomplices of Otho and Nero, to be expelled from Italy, and forbade the knights to disgrace their order by descending on the arena, a practice which had spread from Rome itself even to towns in the country.<sup>1</sup> The conduct of Galeria the wife, and Sextilia the mother, of the new emperor, might help to reassure the minds of the better class. Both these matrons were examples of moderation and prosperity. Sextilia looked with distrust on her son's extraordinary advancement, refusing all public honours herself, and replying to the letter in which he first addressed her by his new appellation, that she had borne a Vitellius, and not a Germanicus. But this high-minded woman died shortly after, and some insinuated that her son had starved her to death, because it had been predicted that he would reign long if he survived his parent: others that he had given her poison at her own request,

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 62. The mathematici were ordered to quit Italy by the kalends of October. They revenged themselves by posting a placard, in which they intimated that Vitellius himself should quit the world ("ne usquam esset") before that day. Suet. *Vitell.* 15. Vitellius, however, did not die till the end of December. Dion (lxxv. 1.) declares that the exact day was predicted, but prudently abstains from citing the date fixed by the decree.



through dread of impending reverses.<sup>1</sup> Such are the kind of stories, improbable and inconsistent with one another, of which much of our history, if it be written at all, must now consist.

But already Vitellius, or at least his shrewder advisers, began to feel the perils of his position, tossed as he was on the waves of so many conflicting tides of military insurrection. The Illyrian legions he had already mortified; but he could not suffer the prætorians to retain their usurped authority, and it was necessary to disband them.<sup>2</sup> The Fourteenth legion, which had fought for Otho at Bedriacum, and refused to admit that it had been worsted, was burning to avenge the disgrace incurred from the event of a few trifling skirmishes. This division had been recalled from Britain by Nero, and thither it was now ordered to return. The First legion of marines was drafted into Spain. The Eleventh and Seventh were sent at the commencement of summer into winter quarters. The Thirteenth was employed in the erection of amphitheatres at Cremona and Bononia, where Cæcina and Valens proposed to amuse the soldiers with gladiatorial shows.

Discharge of  
the prætorians,  
and disposal of  
the Othonian  
legions.

The advance of Vitellius still continued to be marked by excesses and horrors of various kinds. At Ticinum, the dis-

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Vitell.* 14. As we come near to the time of Suetonius, the retailer of these and similar rumours, the domestic history of the Cæsars becomes less trustworthy than ever. He could now only relate the anecdotes of the day, not yet sifted and sanctioned by any standard authority. The death of Sextilia is mentioned by Tacitus without intimating that any suspicion attached to it. See *Hist.* iii. 67.: "Erat illi fessa ætate parens, quæ tamen, paucis ante diebus, opportuna morte excidium domus prævenit, nihil principatu filii adsecuta nisi luctum et bonam famam." Comp. *Hist.* ii. 64.: "Sextilia . . . antiqui moris . . . domus suæ tantum adversa sensit."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 67.: "Addito honestæ missionis lenimento arma ad tribunos suos deferebant." The historian adds that at the next outbreak of civil war these reckless soldiers, who it may be supposed had continued to linger in the city, offered their services to the opponent of Vitellius.

Military disturbance at Ticinum.

ruption of the bands of discipline was more than ever apparent. The emperor lay down to supper with Virginius by his side. The legates and tribunes thronged to his orgies. Outside the imperial tent, centurions and soldiers emulated the dissipation of their chief. Drunkenness and disorder reigned throughout the night. A Gaul and a Roman happened to challenge one another to wrestle; the legionary fell, the auxiliary mocked him; his comrades flew to arms, and two auxiliary cohorts were cut to pieces. Battle would have raged throughout the lines, but for a seasonable alarm. The return of the Fourteenth legion was announced, with swords drawn, and standards advanced, and an attack on the camp was apprehended by the intoxicated mob within it. The alarm was false; but, while it lasted, a slave of Virginius was seized, and charged with the purpose of killing the emperor. The

Narrow escape of Virginius.

death of Virginius was now loudly demanded by the soldiers around the tent. Vitellius, indeed, had the firmness to refuse them; he could not afford to sacrifice so brave and honest a friend. This was the third escape of Virginius, and the great age he eventually attained in peace and honour, made the risks of his early years the more worthy of remark.<sup>1</sup>

From Ticinum Vitellius proceeded to Cremona, and there witnessed the contests of Cæcina's gladiators. Thence he

Brutality of Vitellius on the Field of Bedriacum.

diverged from his route to cross the plain of Bedriacum, and beheld the scene of his victory, still reeking with the fumes of Roman slaughter. The curiosity with which he examined the spot and listened

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 68. Virginius survived to his 83rd year, A. D. 97. The younger Pliny records the lines which he directed to be engraved on his tomb, *Ep.* vi. 10., ix. 19.:

"Hic situs est Rufus, pulso qui Vindice quondam  
Imperium asseruit non sibi, sed patriæ."

They seem to contradict the statement of the historian, that Virginius and Vindex had come to a mutual understanding. This was the tradition to which Juvenal also refers:

"Quid enim Virginius armis  
Debit ulcisci magis, aut cum Vindice Galba."

to the details of the bloody fray, shocked the narrators of his history : he showed no remorse for the death of so many of his countrymen, nor horror at the sight of their remains. Some, indeed, declared that he expressed a brutal pleasure at the scene ; *the corpse of an enemy*, he said, *smells always well, particularly of a citizen*. Nevertheless, he fortified his stomach with draughts of wine, and distributed it largely among his soldiers. Tacitus himself, the most temperate or least fanciful of our authorities, allows that he sacrificed on the field to the *Divinities of the spot*.<sup>1</sup>

The shows of Valens at Bononia were celebrated with unusual pomp, the whole apparatus of imperial luxury being brought for the purpose from Rome, and with it the worthless instruments of Nero's debaucheries, the dancers, singers, and eunuchs, with whom Vitellius had become familiar in the court of the tyrant. As he approached the city the stream of application for places and favours met him with accumulated force ; it was necessary to abridge the short tenure of the designated consuls to make room for more competitors, and some, whom might be expected to put up with an affront, were excluded altogether. The news which now arrived of the adhesion of the Syrian legions dispelled all alarm, and gave the rein to every evil passion. The emperor and the army, with no fear of Vespasian before them, might indulge themselves without restraint. Vitellius would have entered Rome in the garb of war, cloaked and booted, at the head of his troops, with colours flying and trumpets blowing. Such arrogance would have been unparalleled : such flagitiousness would have been a prodigy. Citizens of every rank stood aghast at this vision of foreign invasion descried dimly in the distance ; but the emperor's friends interposed at the last moment, and at the Milvian bridge he consented to lay down his military ensigns, and traversed the streets in the civil *prætexta*, the soldiers following with sheathed swords.<sup>2</sup>

He is with difficulty withheld from entering Rome as an armed conqueror.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 70. Comp. Suet. *Vitell.* 10. ; Dion, lxxv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Comp. Tac. *Hist.* ii. 89. with Suet. *Vitell.* 11. The account of the former is undoubtedly to be preferred.



## CHAPTER LVII.

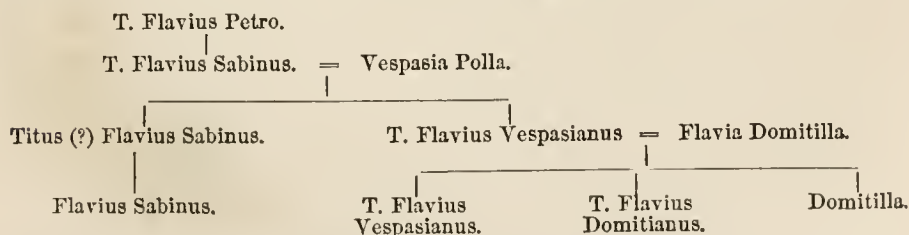
ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF VESPASIAN.—HE IS RECOMMENDED TO THE SYRIAN LEGIONS BY MUCIANUS, AND PROCLAIMED EMPEROR IN THE EAST.—MUCIANUS ADVANCES TOWARDS ITALY, WHILE VESPASIAN OCCUPIES EGYPT.—DISGRACEFUL CONDUCT OF VITELLIUS AT ROME.—HE IS ABANDONED OR FEEBLY SUPPORTED BY HIS PARTISANS.—HIS FORCES DEFEATED AT BEDRIACUM.—ANTONIUS PRIMUS CROSSES THE APENNINES.—VITELLIUS OFFERS TO RESIGN THE EMPIRE, BUT IS PREVENTED BY HIS SOLDIERS.—THE CAPITOL ATTACKED BY THE VITELLIANS AND BURNT.—PRIMUS FORCES HIS WAY INTO ROME.—VITELLIUS SEIZED AND SLAIN.—VESPASIAN ACCEPTED AS EMPEROR.—MUCIANUS CONDUCTS THE GOVERNMENT DURING HIS ABSENCE.—STATE OF AFFAIRS AT ROME.—COMMENCEMENT OF THE RESTORATION OF THE CAPITOL.—SUPERSTITIOUS REVERENCE PAID TO THE FLAVIAN FAMILY.—PRETENDED MIRACLES OF VESPASIAN AT ALEXANDRIA.—HE REACHES ROME.—A. D. 69, 70. A. U. 822, 823.

**T**ITUS FLAVIUS VESPASIANUS, whose career we are now to follow, has already been mentioned as an object of jealousy to Otho, and again to Vitellius; as the man, however, whose rumoured  
Origin and career of Vespasian.adhesion to the latest revolution seemed to establish the usurpation of the adventurer from Germany. The origin of this redoubted soldier was obscure: his family belonged to the Sabine burgh of Reate, and had never risen to public honours. Vespasian had no illustrious images in the modest hall of his fathers. Arrived, at the period now before us, at the advanced age of sixty, he had passed the most active portion of life in a variety of important services.<sup>1</sup> The favour of Narcissus had given him a legion in Britain, where, as we have seen, he had performed some notable exploits,

<sup>1</sup> Vespasian was born at Phalacrine, a village near Reate; but his grand-

and earned the triumphal ornaments. This acknowledgment of his merits was followed, still perhaps through the patronage of the powerful freedman, by two priesthoods and the consulship in the year 804. In the prime of life, and at the height of honour, he had been reduced to inaction by the jealousy of Agrippina, who hated all the dependents of Narcissus; and it was not till her fall that he succeeded to the proconsulship of Africa, which he exercised in 1816. The administration of Vespasian had the rare merit of bringing him no pecuniary advantage. He left the province poorer than he came to it; but he confirmed the opinion of his prudence and firmness, while he acquired a character for integrity. His circumstances, thus honourably narrow, induced him to turn, on quitting office, to private means of maintaining his family. He became a contractor for the beasts, and perhaps for the slaves, of Africa, destined for the Roman market. Following, however, in the train of Nero, during that prince's sojourn in Greece, he gave offence, and incurred some peril, by the bluntness of his manner. It seems that he could not always keep awake through the emperor's displays of singing and acting; an indecorum intolerable to the vain performer, who at last peevishly dismissed him.<sup>1</sup> But when disturbances began to arise in Judea, his military qualities were not to be slighted. Nero intrusted him with the government of Palestine, and the command of

father, the first mentioned of the family, was a citizen of the larger town. Suet. *Vespas.* i. 2. His grandfather was named T. Flavius Petro:



We have here two instances of the practice, common at the time, of giving the elder son the father's, and the younger the mother's, cognomen. See also Suet. *Otho*, 1., *Vitell.* 6. Titus seems to have been the common prænomen of all.

<sup>1</sup> The story is told by Tacitus, *Ann.* xvi. 5., and referred to by Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4.

the forces soon to be called into action there. His temper was prone to superstition.<sup>1</sup> His advance had been hitherto signal; he felt confidence in his own abilities, and believed himself a favourite of fortune; he was surrounded, like every Roman in high station abroad, by flatterers, who nourished every thought of pride or vanity, and, amidst a nation of fanatics, prophets were not wanting to apply to the renowned Vespasianus the omens which were supposed popularly to point to a Jewish deliverer and Messiah. The successes he gained in his first encounters with the Jews encouraged him to brood over these shadowy intimations; and, when he visited the summit of Mount Carmel to sacrifice to the deity of the spot, the priests declared, on inspecting the entrails, that whatever he was purposing, whether it were to build a house, to buy an estate, or to increase his family of slaves, the mansion should be ample, the property vast, the number of his dependents unusually great. His attendants, aware of the ideas he was beginning to harbour, spread this oracular sentence far and near, and the eyes of the soldiers and provincials were turned more freely and fixed more devoutly upon the sturdy veteran than ever. To Nero, to Galba, to Otho, as they appeared successively on the scene, he frankly offered his own and his soldiers' obedience; but with every change of dynasty, his submission to the choice of the capital was more and more shaken, and he was strongly affected by the silence with which the oath he tendered to Vitellius was received by the troops he commanded.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless Vespasian, with the discretion which became his years and experience, was not lightly moved to enter the field against the chief accepted at Rome. Besides his own fortunes, those of two sons—Titus and Domitianus, the one already launched in the career of public service, the other just entering upon it—trembled in the balance, and he hesitat-

Vespasian recommended to the Syrian legions, and proclaimed emperor at Alexandria by the prefect of Egypt.

<sup>1</sup> Aurelius Victor says of him: "Simul divinis deditus, quorum vera plerisque negotiis compererat." *Cæsar.* 9.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. 74.



ed to expose their brilliant prospects to the chances of a military revolution. He well knew, as a general, the valour of the Germanic forces, with which he had himself served : perhaps he remembered that, at least since the times of Sulla, the forces of the East had never measured themselves with success against the hardier warriors of the Western world. The governor of Palestine, moreover, was dependent on the higher authority and wider command of the Syrian proconsul. Vespasian would shrink from the call of public favour while Mucianus still adhered to the new emperor, however loose and reluctant such an adherence might be. But when Mucianus himself urged him to the enterprise, and offered all the weight of his support, hesitation would be merely pusillanimous. After several private conferences to which he was invited on the borders of his province, the proconsul led him to the cantonments of the Syrian army, and recommended his cause to its support. He was received with enthusiasm. Men and officers, impatient at the superior fortune of their rivals in the West, exulting perhaps in the prospect of returning in triumph to Italy, vied with one another in urging their favourite to action, while he still cautiously restrained them from saluting him with the irrevocable title of Emperor. Mucianus returned to Antioch to complete his preparations ; Vespasian himself in his own head-quarters at Cæsarea. Tiberius Alexander, Nero's prefect in Egypt, declared for the new competitor ; thus securing the flank of his position in Palestine, assuring the maintenance of his troops in the East, and threatening Rome itself with the loss of its most plenteous storehouse. The prefect, indeed, was the first to invite his soldiers to proclaim Vespasian emperor : it was from the first of July, the day of this solemn inauguration at Alexandria, that the annals of the new principate were afterwards dated.<sup>1</sup> The Judean legions followed, on the third of the same month, with the ardour of a common instinct. The

Tac. *Hist.* ii. 29. ; Suet. *Vesp.* 6. The second date (v. non. Jul.) is taken from Tacitus, and is preferable to that given by Suetonius (v. Id. Jul., i. e. the 11th.)

word Emperor was first dropped, as it were, by accident : it was immediately caught up, passed from rank to rank, and finally ratified by the unanimous acclamations of the whole army. The titles of Cæsar and Augustus were speedily added. Mucianus was prepared for action. As soon as the report arrived at Antioch, he proposed the oath to his legions there, and, proceeding to the theatre, harangued the people fluently in Greek, with a grace which charmed them : to the soldiers he represented that Vitellius had resolved to quarter his Gauls and Germans in the luxurious stations of Syria, and transfer to the savage North the troops which had revelled so long in the pleasures of Asia. The provincials were terrified at the prospect of this settlement of barbarians among them ; the soldiers were not only alarmed but exasperated.<sup>1</sup>

By the 15th of July all the legions of Syria and the eastern frontier had pledged themselves to the new aspirant.

They were supported by the vassals or allies of the empire ; by Sohemus, king of Ituræa ; by Antiochus, king of Commagene ; by Agrippa, a younger son of Herod, the nominal sovereign of some petty districts of Palestine, long retained at Rome, whence he had managed, on the news of the impending revolution, to escape to his own dominions ; and by his sister Berenice, queen of Chalcis, intriguing and beautiful, and in favour with Vespasian, old as he was. From Achaia to Armenia, all the provinces of the East followed the common impulse, to range the eastern half of the empire against the western. Mucianus summoned his chief adherents to a meeting at Berytus. Money was demanded, levies were ordered, garrisons stationed, magazines and arsenals established. A base was laid for extensive and prolonged operations. Vespasian was full of activity, lavishing exhortations or praises, as each were required ; paying court to the senators resident in the province ; engaging the Parthians and Armenians to respect the frontiers ; laborious, vigilant, discreet in all things ; showing

Preparations  
of Vespasian  
for contesting  
the empire.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 74-78.

himself fit to wield the empire by the firmness with which he withheld from the soldiers any extravagant largess. Titus was charged with the conduct of affairs in Judea, while he undertook himself to secure the footing promised him in Egypt. The forces of the East were divided into three armies; one of these was deemed sufficient to confront the legions of Vitellius; the second was destined to control revolt within the frontiers; the third to repress aggression from beyond them. The new emperor made preparations for maintaining the integrity of the empire at the moment when he was bending all his energies to acquire it; such had been the policy which gained favour and admiration for Augustus; *Senate, People, and Gods*, would declare, as of old, for the man who devoted himself to the true interests of the republic; even the prætorians would acknowledge him as their legitimate chief, and break their unworthy bondage to a selfish voluptuary.<sup>1</sup>

Mucianus led the van with deliberate and majestic march, neither hurrying forwards, as if anxious or impatient, nor loitering, as if indifferent to success. The strong current swept all lesser bodies into its vortex. Officers, military and civil, Romans and provincials, ships and soldiers, arms and treasures, were all wafted along in a stream of increasing weight and volume. *Money*, said Mucianus, *is the sinews of civil war*.<sup>2</sup> An invader might throw himself on the enemy's country for support; but the leader of a party must depend on a well-filled military chest. Of his own means he gave largely; but he was not more abstinent than the chiefs of former revolutions in requiring contributions from his adherents, or extorting treasure from the temples and other public sources. The tide of arms rolled away; but the taxes now imposed

Mucianus advances westward and receives powerful support.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 79-83.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 84.: "Eos esse belli *civilis* nervos." We have adopted the phrase as a rhetorical commonplace, applying it to war in general; but our author is more precise. The metaphor, however, had already been employed by Cicero (*Philipp.* v. 2.): "nervi civilis belli pecunia infinita."



by Vespasian's lieutenant were transferred as the legacy of war to the peace which followed; for Vespasian himself, though averse in the first instance to imposing them, was too well satisfied with their returns ever to remit them. And now three Illyrian legions joined; the Third, the Eighth, and the Seventh or Claudian, faithful to Otho as the friend of Nero, and heir to the fortunes of the family from which it derived its title.<sup>1</sup> These legions had advanced as far as Aquileia to fight for their favourite, and on hearing of his death, stoned the bearer of the news, tore the colours which bore the name of Vitellius, sacked the military chest, and impetuously defied the conqueror. They now rejoiced in the opportunity of transferring themselves to Vespasian, and speedily brought over to him two other legions stationed in Pannonia, which were followed by the garrisons of Dalmatia. The seeds of still further defection were scattered by letters to the troops in Spain and Gaul, and particularly to the Fourteenth legion, now sullenly retiring towards Britain.<sup>2</sup>

At the moment that the army in Syria was proclaiming Vespasian emperor, Vitellius was making his entry into Rome, at the head of four legions, twelve squadrons of horse, and thirty-four auxiliary cohorts, a veteran force of sixty thousand men, but corrupted by three months of licence. His first act was to sacrifice in the Capitol, and there he embraced his mother, on whom he pressed the title of Augusta: the next day he harangued the people and senate, in the strain of a foreign conqueror rather than of a citizen, with much ill-merited praise of his own moderation and vigilance. His career, however, in the city was attended from the first with evil omens. The first edict he issued as Chief Pontiff was dated the 15th kalends of August (July 18th), the day of the Allia and Cremera.<sup>3</sup> Yet his behaviour in the Senate-house, the forum,

Conduct of Vitellius at Rome.

<sup>1</sup> The name of Claudian was given, as may be remembered, to this legion as a reward for its zeal in suppressing the revolt of Scribonianus. See above chap. xlix.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 85, 86.; Suet. *Vesp.* 6.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 91.; Suet. *Vitell.* 11.

and the theatre, seems to have been modest and becoming. He was assiduous in attending the discussions of the fathers, even on matters of trifling concern. He suffered himself to be opposed, or was satisfied, if warmly attacked, with invoking the protection of the tribunes. Even then he soon recovered his composure, and would only remark that it was nothing new or strange for two senators to differ; *for his own part*, he would add, *he had sometimes disagreed with Thræsea*. The comparison thus implied between the sage and the profligate, the patriot and the usurper, provoked some bitter derision. But this outward moderation betokened only the easy compliance of his character. Cæcina and Valens, it was soon found, were the real governors of the empire. The chief appointments were all made through their influence, which they exerted with mutual rivalry. They enriched themselves at the same time with the estates and houses both of friends and enemies, while the decrees for restoring their possessions to the recalled exiles were generally allowed to be frustrated. They studied to engross their master in the low debauchery to which he was naturally addicted, while they took the cares of empire off his hands. He passed his days and nights in feasting and sleeping, and while the treasury was empty, and the promised donative could not be discharged, he lavished all the money he could grasp in the indulgence of the coarsest appetites. Within the few months of his power he spent, as was computed, nine hundred millions of sesterces, above seven millions of our money, in vulgar and brutal sensuality.<sup>1</sup> But the sol-

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 95.: "Novies millies sestertium paucissimis mensibus intervertisse creditur." The Romans were generally content with a single meal, the *cœna*: the slight refectious of the morning and midday, *jentaculum* and *prandium*, were rarely taken in company. But Vitellius had his banquets thrice or four times in the day, adding to the above named, a *comissatio*, or "revel," at night. To the abstemious people of the South such gluttony seemed prodigious; but Vitellius had recourse to the vomit. His brother gave him a supper in which 2000 fishes and 7000 birds were served up. Vitellius had an immense dish made, which he called the "Shield of Minerva," and loaded with peacocks' and pheasants' tongues, and roes of the mullet and scarus: his delicacies were

diers, defrauded of their stipulated reward, required other compensation, and they were permitted to range the city freely, and taste its amusements and dissipations, to the ruin of their habits and discipline. The prætorians had been disbanded, and the ordinary police of the city was neglected. The legionaries chose their own quarters at will, and when these rude children of the North stretched their tents on the pleasant but unhealthy slopes of the Vatican, they suffered severely from intemperance in food and bathing, as well as from the malaria of the spot. It became necessary to re-embodify the prætorian and the urban guards. Valens took this important charge on himself to the exclusion of his colleague. He drafted twenty thousand of the legionaries into these favoured bands; but the legions were left thereby not weakened only, but discontented. They were to be gratified in their turn with fresh indulgences. Vitellius conceded to them the execution of three Gaulish nobles who had fought for Vindex; so far back did their animosity reach. The emperor's birthday was celebrated with an immense show of gladiators, and Nero's obsequies were performed in the Campus Martius. The tyrant's body was removed from the sarcophagus in which it had been deposited, and laid on a funeral pyre.<sup>1</sup> The Augustales applied the torch, and the ashes, I presume, of the last of the Julii were finally consigned to the mausoleum of Augustus. The reign of the freedmen recommenced; Asiaticus and Polyeletus, such were the names of the creatures of Vitellius, recalled by their avarice and audacity the memory of the favourites of Claudius. The degradation of Rome, hardly awakened from its dream of in-

brought him from the Caspian and the Straits of Gibraltar. Comp. for these and other extravagancies, Suet. *Vitell.* 13.; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* xxxv. 46.; Dion, lxxv. 3.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 95.; Suet. *Vitell.* 11. The author quoted by Suidas in voc. Βιτέλλιος, says expressly that the corpse, νεκρός, of Nero, was removed from its original sepulchre. But this sepulchre was not the obscure place he supposes. Suetonius describes it, on the contrary, as a sarcophagus (solum) of porphyry, crowned with an altar-slab of white Carrara marble, and inclosed in a vault of Thasian stone. *Ner.* 50.



dependence, was as complete as it was sudden, and never yet perhaps had she sunk so low in sensuality and licentiousness, as in the few months which followed on the death of Otho.

The spell was broken by the first cry of military defection. The Third legion, it was announced, had revolted, but the whole truth was still withheld from the public ear. Aid was hastily summoned from Spain, Britain, and Germany. But the provinces were unmoved, and the chiefs of the legions hesitated.

Vitellius is deserted in some quarters, and feebly supported in others.

Hordeonius pleaded that he was threatened by the Batavi, and could not spare troops; Bolanus, beyond the channel, that he was fully occupied with the defence of his posts on the Trent and Severn. Spain had no chief of consular rank, and her officers were too jealous one of another to take a step in advance. Africa alone responded cheerfully. The indolence of Vitellius had made him a favourite with the troops he had formerly commanded there, whereas Vespasian's strictness had offended them, and they remembered having once pelted him on his tribunal with turnips.<sup>1</sup> The adhesion of the African province was undoubtedly of great importance to balance the defection of Egypt; but in this crisis, when all depended on the strength and number of the allies which could be mustered on either side, the elements themselves conspired against the doomed Vitellius. A long prevalence of north-westerly winds, bore to Greece and Asia intelligence of the movements of the one party, while it withheld from Italy all accounts of the operations of the other. The occupation of Illyricum and Rhætia by Vespasian's adherents, enabled him at the same time to close the communications by land. Vitellius continued long to indulge in fatal security. At last the imminence of danger could not be disguised. Valens and Cæcina were despatched to the north of Italy, and with them marched the languid and broken remnants of the Germanic legions: their ranks were thin; their pace was slow; their arms rusty or decayed; even their horses were

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 4.

out of condition: they shrank from the heat, the dust, and the wind; nor did they bear the restraints of discipline better than the toils of service. Valens lingered some time behind, under the plea of illness: Cæcina, it was believed, already meditated defection; certainly he was jealous of his colleague's influence, and might hope for more consideration under another master. The Vitellian forces were at last assembled in the plains of the lower Po, between Cremona and Ravenna, and there Cæcina began to corrupt the fidelity of the men and their officers, with the aid of Bassus, prefect of the Adriatic fleet, whose influence extended to the marine cohorts, still mindful of Galba's severity, and of Otho's favours.<sup>1</sup>

The three Flavian legions,—such is the title we may give to the adherents of Vespasian,—which had now seized the passes of the Julian Alps, and were preparing to pour down into Italy, were commanded by Antonius Primus. While some of his officers advised delay, to await the arrival of Mucianus, this spirited partisan would listen to no such timid counsels. He was anxious to be the first of his faction in the field. He despised the adversary before him; perhaps he had secret communications with Cæcina. Nevertheless, his strength was much inferior to that of the enemy, and the resolution to rush headlong into the midst of them seems rash and precipitate. But the first engagements that occurred were favourable to the invaders. The outposts of the Vitellians were driven back from the head of the Adriatic. The Flavians crossed the deep and rapid rivers, and turned or carried every fortress, till they arrived before Verona, and spread their numerous and well-appointed cavalry over the broad plains around it. Here indeed Cæcina, it seems, might, if he chose, have overwhelmed them; but he contented himself with issuing manifestos against their chief; nor in these did he exhibit much confidence. Antonius retorted in a bolder strain. He was

Antonius Primus leads Vespasian's forces into Italy.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* ii. 101.

overtaken by letters from Mucianus, rebuking his haste and requiring him to wait for the reinforcements. Vespasian, too, announced that he was in possession of Egypt, and could reduce Vitellius to capitulate, by withholding her supplies from Rome. But Primus retained his confidence, and determined to win the victory alone. The legates of two legions shared his authority, and encumbered his schemes: an opportune revolt of their soldiers, fomented perhaps by himself, enabled him to remove them from the camp, under pretence of providing for their security. He was now sole commander, and eager to push his advantage. The defection of the fleet at Ravenna from Vitellius increased his ardour. Cæcina would have played into his hands, but was prevented from consummating the treachery by his own soldiers; and now both armies prepared for a decisive action on the plain of Bedriacum, where the Vitellians, amidst all their present discouragements, were inspired with the recollection of recent triumph. Left without a general themselves, for they had thrown Cæcina into chains, they were opposed to a bold and able leader, and, as on the former occasion, victory now declared for the army which was best commanded. The Flavians were twice saved from defeat by the energy of Primus; and when at last Cremona fell into their hands, the remnant of the Vitellian legions broke and dispersed in all directions.<sup>1</sup>

And defeats the  
Vitellians at  
Bedriacum.

Cremona was a Roman colony, established as a check upon the Gauls of the Cisalpine, and a barrier against more distant invaders. Well placed on a navigable stream amidst a fertile country, it rapidly increased in numbers and importance; but its wealth had tempted once before the cupidity of a conqueror, and it deserved under the Triumvirs the epithet of *hapless*, which was now to become more terribly appropriate.<sup>2</sup> Unscrupulous as the Romans had ever shown themselves in spoiling foes, or even dependents and allies, they had rarely, even in the worst licence of civil conflict,

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 15–35.; Suet. *Vitell.* 15.; Dion, lxxv. 10–15.

<sup>2</sup> Virg. *Ecl.* ix. 28.: “Miseræ vicina Cremonæ.”



surrendered their own colonies to the fate of war. But the example of Præneste under Sulla was now to be repeated, with at least equal horrors. After a brave defence, the camp of the Vitellians had been forced; the town had capitulated with an assurance of protection. But Primus, as an intriguer and adventurer, had bought the swords of his soldiers by hopes which he had not yet redeemed. They awaited impatiently a word or gesture to commence the work of plunder, possibly they had already commenced it; and when, in taking a bath after the fatigues of the attack, he remarked that the water was not warm enough, the words of the attendant, *It shall soon be hotter*, were caught up by the troops around him, and perverted into an order, or accepted as an omen, for burning the city. Cremona was sacked with every aggravation of cruelty and brutality; her people were abused and slaughtered; her buildings levelled with the ground; one edifice alone, the temple of Mephitis, the deity of the surrounding marshes, escaped the indiscriminate destruction.<sup>1</sup>

*But Vitellius, says Tacitus, after the departure of Cæcina, and presently of Valens, drowned his cares in voluptuous-*  
*ness: he neither collected arms, nor harangued or*  
*trained his soldiers, nor showed himself every-*  
*where in public; but burying himself in the shade*  
*of his gardens, like those slothful brutes, which, if you give*  
*them food, lie still and slumber, left the present, the imminent,*  
*and the distant, all in the same forgetfulness.*<sup>2</sup> He was lounging lazily in the groves of Aricia when the defection of his fleet was announced to him, and struck him with consternation. The treachery of Cæcina followed; but in this case his alarm was relieved by learning that the traitor was captured and detained. Nevertheless his spirits were depressed, and all courage and confidence soon failed him. Trembling and suspicious, he was easily impelled to cruelty. To his

Bestiality of  
 Vitellius: his  
 fears, cruelties,  
 and disasters.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 36.: "Umbraculis hortorum abditus, ut ignava animalia, quibus si cibum suggeras, jacent torpentque, præterita, instantia, futura, pari oblivione dimiserat."

fears he sacrificed a man of high distinction, Junius Blæsus, who it seems had allowed himself, in this crisis, to hold a banquet in his house. He was accused of treasonable aspirations. His Junian and Antonian blood were held sufficient to condemn him. Vitellius caused him to be poisoned, then visited and affected to condole with him in his sickness, remarking afterwards that he had feasted his eyes with the sight of a dying enemy. The deed, the motive, and the manner, as reported by common fame, were treasured up by the affronted nobles of Rome, to whose indignation we may perhaps ascribe a part at least of the stories which have stamped Vitellius as the most bestial of tyrants.<sup>1</sup> Valens meanwhile, finding, as he advanced towards the Cisalpine, that the country was in the hands of the Flavians, and perceiving that the reinforcements he brought with him were too few to overcome, too numerous to pass them unperceived, sent on his main body to Ariminum, to do the best they could for themselves; but turned aside himself with a few followers only, crossed the Apennines, and hearing of the capture of Cremona, took ship at Pisæ, intending to throw himself into the Narbonensis, and organize the Vitellians in the province. Adverse winds compelled him to land at the Portus Monæci. The coast was occupied by Valerius Paulinus, a Flavian. The treacherous sea seemed less hostile than the land, and Valens launched again upon the waves. Once more he was driven ashore on the islands called Stœchades, and was made prisoner. The news of these losses spread rapidly through the West, and Spain, Gaul, and Britain declared without reserve in favour of Vespasian.<sup>2</sup>

The withdrawal of numerous battalions from the defence of the frontiers gave the barbarians, in many quarters, an opportunity which they did not fail to seize. In Britain, in Germany, in Dacia, the outposts of the empire were attacked, and the majesty of

Slow and cautious policy of Vespasian.

<sup>1</sup> The charge against Vitellius of setting up Nero openly as his pattern in the empire (see Suet. *Vitell.* 11.), has the air of a senatorial misrepresentation.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 44.

Rome insulted. But of these petty disturbances I will not pause to speak here. The aggressions of the Dacians, which alone could have had any effect in checking the progress of the Flavian generals, were repressed by Mucianus, the victory at Cremona coming opportunely to release one of his legions from the necessity of facing the Vitellians. At the same time, the attention of Vespasian was recalled from his great enterprise by a movement on the far distant shores of the Euxine, and he paused to detach a force to Trapezus, to check the revolt of an ambitious freedman. Success in this quarter, and victory in Italy, were announced to him at the same moment. He hastened his march towards Alexandria, with the avowed purpose of threatening Rome with famine. His plan was to advance from Egypt, by land and sea, into the province of Africa, and grasp both the granaries of Italy. Yet this slow and wary policy was not without its dangers. Amidst the chances of civil war, swiftness of movement is generally the first condition of success. New perils multiply at every step. Foes may be routed, but at the next moment friends may become foes. The triumphs of Primus had already turned his head. He thought the question between the rival emperors decided, and by himself alone. Uncontrolled by a superior on the spot, he acted for himself and his legions as though he were king of Italy, extorting and plundering at his own pleasure, and repelling, not without scorn, the rebukes of Mucianus, while his despatches even to Vespasian were composed in the spirit of an equal rather than a subject. But Primus, adroit as a chief of freebooters in managing the temper of his soldiers, was no match in policy for statesmen and imperators.<sup>1</sup>

Vitellius was still at Rome, still grovelling in his sensuality, refusing even to credit the account of his disasters. He

Vitellius puts himself at the head of his forces. forbade the subject to be discussed, and suppressed, as far as he could, the reports which circulated about it. The Flavian generals sent him

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 45-53.



back their prisoners, that he might know the truth from the mouths of actual witnesses. Vitellius saw, interrogated, and immediately executed them. A brave centurion extorted his leave to visit the scene of warfare, and ascertain the state of affairs; but, spurned and insulted on his return by his infatuated chief, he threw himself indignantly on his sword. At last, Vitellius roused himself to despatch fourteen prætorian cohorts, with a legion of marines, and some squadrons of horse, to occupy the passes of the Apennines. He placed his brother Lucius in command of the city, and made some faint efforts to conciliate the nobles by the appointment of consuls for several years forward. At the same time he conferred the Latin privileges upon allies and subjects, reckless of the future condition of the realm which was passing so rapidly from his hands. Finally, he advanced in person, at the impatient demand of his soldiers, to the camp at Mevania, at the foot of the mountains which constituted the last barrier between Rome and the invaders.<sup>1</sup>

But now a fresh mishap befell him. The fleet at Misenum, the guard or convoy of the corn-fleets, revolted: the sailors on board, moreover, were trained to act on land, and they provoked an insurrection against him in Campania. Capua, with its schools of gladiators, held out for Vitellius, while the patrician retreat of Puteoli declared against him. The first officer he sent to check this movement went over, with his forces, to the enemy; and the Flavian partisans, thus increased in strength and numbers, occupied the walls of Tarracina. Vitellius, in dismay and consternation, now drew his troops nearer to Rome, leaving the Apennines open to the enemy, and sought, by frantic promises and entreaties, to induce the senators, the knights, and even the lowest of the citizens, to offer men, arms, and money in aid of his falling fortunes. The news of the rising in Campania roused the Marsians, the Pelignians, and the Samnites.<sup>2</sup> The heart of Italy was more ex-

He suffers reverses and falls back upon Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 54, 55.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 59.: "Erectus Samnis, Pelignusque, et Marsi, æmulatione

cited by the personal struggle of two obscure adventurers than by the war of classes in the last age of the republic. The cold and wet of the winter season, which had now set in, was the last ally of Vitellius; and the difficulty with which Antonius at length overcame this mountain barrier, though unopposed, showed how easily the emperor might have checked and perhaps destroyed him in the attempt. But the passage was now effected: the two armies confronted each other in the valley of the Nar. Deserted by their emperor, and without a leader, the Vitellians had no spirit for fighting. The head of Valens, kept some time in custody, and now slain at Urbinum, was exhibited to them: a trophy which awed them into submission. Antonius received them with clemency, and breaking them in two divisions for greater security, was content with setting watch over their movements, and suffered them to retain their arms. He then proceeded to offer terms to Vitellius himself, promising him life, large revenues, and a quiet retreat in Campania, as the reward of submission. These offers were confirmed by Mucianus. Vitellius, stunned by his misfortunes, passively acquiesced. Had not the foe, says Tacitus, remembered that he had once been emperor, he would himself have forgotten it. It is gratifying, however, to find that in the heat of a Roman civil war, one rival could make such assurances of clemency, and the other could confide in them.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless the advent of Primus and his plundering legions was anticipated with horror by the chief citizens.

Vitellius offers to resign the empire, but is prevented by his soldiers.

Their object was to save Rome, whatever else might happen, from the licence of an invading army. Vitellius had retained in the city, observed, but not guarded, the brother and the younger son of his rival. Fear for himself and for his own family, as in Otho's case, had introduced this new feature of

quod Campania prævenisset, ut in novo obsequio, ad cuncta belli munia acres erant."

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 60-63.

mercy and consideration into the quarrels of party chiefs. Flavius Sabinus was some years older than Vespasian, the head of their house, and the wealthier of the two. Devoid of personal ambition, and only anxious to spare effusion of blood, he listened willingly to the instances of the nobles, now gathered round him, urging him to assume the lead of his brother's faction, and discuss personally with Vitellius the terms of accommodation. In the temple of Apollo, with one witness from among the chiefs on either side, the transfer of the empire was debated and settled.<sup>1</sup> But, unfortunately, the city was still filled with the fugitives from so many disasters, desperate swordsmen who could not endure the shame of yielding. They muttered in the ears of their trembling chief, that there was no hope of safety for him in a private station. The present danger, however, seemed more terrible than the distant, and he could not be prevailed on to arm again. He issued from the palace, clothed in black, his family in mourning around him.<sup>2</sup> His infant child was borne in a litter. The procession might have been taken for a funeral. The people applauded compassionately, but the soldiers frowned in silence. Vitellius made a short harangue in the forum, and then, taking his dagger from his side, as the ensign of power, tendered it to the consul Cæcilius. The soldiers murmured aloud, and the consul, in pity or from fear, declined to accept it. He then turned towards the temple of Concord, meaning there to leave the symbols of imperial office, and retire to the house of his brother. But the soldiers now interposed. They would not suffer him to hide himself in a private dwelling, but compelled him to retrace his steps to the palace, which he entered once more, hardly conscious whether he were still emperor or not.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 65.: "Sæpe domi congressi (in the palace?) postremo in æde Apollinis pepigere." The temple of Apollo was probably that on the Palatine, connected with the imperial residence. Either it had suffered little in Nero's fire, or it had been speedily restored.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 67., xv. Kal. Jan. (Dec. 18. 822): "Audita defectione legionis cohortiumque, quæ se Narniæ dediderant."

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 68.: "Interclusum aliud iter, idque solum quod in Sacram



By the senate, however, by the knights, the magistrates, and police of the city, the transfer of the empire was regarded as accomplished. All crowded to the mansion of Sabinus, as the representative of their new sovereign, and there heard, not without dismay, the murmurs and menaces of the Germanic cohorts. They urged Sabinus to arm at once for their defence, for his own defence, for the defence of his brother's throne; but their force was small, their measures were hastily taken, and while conveying him towards the palace, which they wished him at once to occupy, they were met, at a spot called Fundanius' pool, by the enraged Vitellians, attacked, and routed.<sup>1</sup> Sabinus, with those nearest to him, made for the Capitoline hill, and threw himself into the enclosed precincts of the Capitolium, or temple of Jupiter. The Vitellians contented themselves with watching the outlets during the day; but at night they were too indolent or too careless to keep guard through a violent storm of rain, and Sabinus was enabled to communicate with his friends in the city, to receive Domitianus and his own children into his place of refuge, and notify his peril to the Flavian generals beyond the walls. At dawn he sent to Vitellius to complain of the violation of their agreement, and remind him of the good faith with which he had himself acted, and the indulgence with which, though backed by a conquering army, he had treated his opponent. Vitellius assented to these representations, but pleaded his inabil-

*Viam pergeret patebat.*" Vitellius had descended into the Via Sacra by the Porta Mugionis, traversed the forum, ascended the rostra, and proceeded to the temple of Concord at the foot of the Capitoline. He would have retired to the house of Sabinus, which I conjecture (see the following note) to have been in the direction of the Quirinal; but the soldiers compelled him to return by the same way he had come. "*Tum consilii inops in palatium rediit.*"

<sup>1</sup> Of the Lacus Fundani we only learn from an inscription (Grüter, 396. 5.) that it gave name to a Vicus. The Curtian and Servilian pools indicated ancient swamps in the trough of the forum, which had been drained by the great Cloaca. Possibly the Fundanian Pool was a similar spot near the Suburra. It seems, from the narrative, that it lay nearly between the house of Sabinus and the Palatine. The inscription is said to have been found on the Quirinal.

ity to restrain his own soldiers, and could only indicate to the envoy a secret way of exit from the palace. Scarcely had this officer returned to the Capitol, when the Vitellians rushed tumultuously, without a leader, to the assault. They mounted the ascent from the forum to the main entrance of the enclosure, and reached an outer gate on the slope, as it would appear, of the Clivus:<sup>1</sup> the Flavians issued on the roofs of the colonnades which flanked the right side of the ascent, and hurled stones and tiles on the assailants. They in their turn, not being furnished with military engines, nor pausing to send for them, threw blazing brands into the colonnades, which were probably of wood, and thus drove the defenders from arch to arch, till the fire reached the gate. The doors would have been soon consumed, and the Vitellians would have rushed into the enclosure, but Sabinus had torn from their pedestals the statues of gods and men which thronged the precincts of the temple, and cast them down before the gates to form a barrier. Thus baffled, the assailants retreated down the hill to the forum, where two other ways branched off, the one immediately to the right, ascending to the Asylum be-

Attack and defence of the Capitol.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 71.: "Cito agmine forum et imminencia foro templa prætervecti, erigunt aciem per adversum collem, usque ad primas Capitolinæ arcis fores." For a full discussion of the topography of this interesting passage I must refer the reader to a notice in the *Journal of Classical Philology*, No. x. Mar. 1857. It may suffice to state in this place the conclusions to which I am led.—1. The point of attack was the Capitoline temple or Capitol, called by Tacitus Capitolium and Arx Capitolina. 2. This temple stood on the Tarpeian or S. W. summit of the Capitoline hill, the N. W. summit (the site of the present Araceli) being the Arx proper, at this time an indefensible position. 3. The outer gate ("primæ fores") was perhaps that known by the name of the Porta Pandana, on the ascent of the Capitoline, beneath the Tabularium. 4. The ascent by the Hundred Steps was from the Velabrum to the left. 5. That by the Lucus Asyli was from the Forum and Carcer to the right. 6. The second attack was made from the level of the Asylum (about the present steps by the Conservators' palace), the assailants having turned the exterior defences of the Capitol beneath the Tabularium. These defences, indeed, had been only extemporized, for the Porta Pandana was generally left open, from whence it took its name.

tween the Tabularium and the Career; the other in the opposite direction, and much more circuitous, passing through the Velabrum beneath the Tarpeian rock, and so by the flight of the Hundred Stairs to the platform of the Capitol. On each side there were, as it appears, lateral approaches to the temple; that from the Asylum was the nearest, and here the Vitellians pressed with the greatest force and numbers. The base of the Capitol was about thirty feet higher than that of the Asylum; but they easily scaled the houses, which leant against the wall, and rose to the level of the enclosing

Conflagration of the temple. rampart.<sup>1</sup> The assailants forced their way by fire, the defenders strove by the same means to obstruct their progress, nor was it known from which side the flames alighted on the roofs of the Capitoline buildings, spread along the galleries which surrounded the triple cell, and finally kindled the gable of dry and ancient wood which crowned its summit.<sup>2</sup> The whole temple was soon in a blaze from end to end, and the august sanctuary of the Roman people was consumed in the raging conflagration.

The assault, the defence, the conflagration, were watched

<sup>1</sup> The Capitoline temple comprehended three cells, those of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, beneath a single roof and pediment. It may have been about fifty feet in width, and less, I suppose, in height; built of stone, but the roof of wood. It was surrounded on three sides by rows of pillars, double at the sides, triple in front, but seems to have been closed in with a blank wall at the back. This precinct was nearly a square of two hundred feet, erected upon a stone platform, which itself was supported by vast obstructions from the base of the hill. There seems to have been also an outer precinct, the Area Capitolina, perhaps only in front, and the whole, it may be presumed, was enclosed with a wall. The Capitol faced S. (Liv. i. 55.), more precisely, I imagine, S. E., fronting the Forum.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. l. c.: "Inde lapsus ignis in porticus-appositas ædibus; mox sustinentes fastigium aquilæ vetere ligno traxerunt flammam alueruntque." The "aquilæ" are the leaning rafters which formed the angle of the pediment, which seem to have been open, according to the well-known description of the temple in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* of Euripides. We are not to suppose that the temples of Rome at this period were generally constructed so rudely; but the priests had insisted that the Capitol should be rebuilt, after the Sullan conflagration, exactly on the ancient model.



by Vitellius from the palace opposite ; by the Roman people from the forum and Valabrum beneath, as well as from the summit of every hill. *The Gauls*, he exclaimed, *were again masters of the city ; yet even the Gauls had never burnt the Capitol, nor overthrown the sacred pledge of empire, the shrine of Jupiter, the Best and Greatest, the shrine vowed by Tarquinius Priscus, and built from the spoils of war by Superbus.* Once, indeed, in the first civil war, that holy fane had been consumed by fire ; but it had risen again from its ashes, crected by Sulla, and dedicated by Catulus, whose honoured name had continued to grace its summit amidst so many monuments devoted to the glory of the Cæsars.<sup>1</sup> The fugitives within the precincts were dismayed with horror at the scene. Sabinus lost all courage and presence of mind, and made no further attempt at defence. The Gauls and Germans, checked by no reverence for Roman divinities, burst in with yells of triumph, and put to the sword all that could not escape in the confusion. Domitian contrived, with a freedman's help, to disguise himself in priest's robes, and found an asylum with a servant of the temple.<sup>2</sup> Sabinus was seized, bound and carried to Vitellius ; the populace clamoured for his death, as the author of the national calamity ; and Vitellius in vain expostulated with them before the doors of the palace. The old man was struck down, pierced and mutilated, and his headless trunk dragged to the Gemoniæ. Atticus, one of the consuls, who was taken with him, saved himself by declaring that his own hand had fired the Capitol. The Vitellians were satisfied with this avowal, which seemed to relieve them from the crime, and the indignation of the citizens was already appeased by the blood of Sabinus.<sup>3</sup>

Domitian escapes. Sabinus is taken, and slain.

<sup>1</sup> See above, chap. iv. of this work (Vol. I. p. 155, note). Notwithstanding the decree of the senate for the substitution of Cæsar's name for that of Catulus, the original inscription remained. Tacitus says expressly : "Lutatii Catuli nomen inter tanta Cæsarum opera usque ad Vitellium mansit."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 74. : "Lineo amictu." Comp. Suet. *Domit.* 1. : "Psiaci elatus habitu."

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 75.

But the blood of a brother of Vespasian could not sink into the ground. No more hope of pardon for the conquered ;

Antonius leads  
his forces to  
the gates of  
Rome.

no room for retreat and unmolested privacy. The murderer of Sabinus must now rush to the field, or fall by the hand of the executioner.

Meanwhile Lucius Vitellius had not yet laid down his arms. From his camp at Feronia he continued to watch Tarracina, and, gaining admittance there by treachery, slew the Flavian commander and his undisciplined partisans. Had he now returned at once to Rome, he would have met the Flavians in the heart of the city, and the conflict which would have ensued between them might have ended in its utter destruction. But he contented himself with sending to ask his brother whether he should return, or prosecute the reduction of Campania. By this delay the event was decided. Primus was advancing along the Flaminian Way, but leisurely, in order not to outstrip the arrival of Mucianus. At Oriculum he halted for some days to keep the feast of the Saturnalia. However, he sent forward Petilius Cerealis with a thousand horse ; and this squadron crossing from the Flaminian to the Salarian Way, attempted to penetrate into the city. But the Vitellians were on the alert, and received them with a mixed force of horse and foot in the lanes and among the garden walls outside the gates, where they checked and discomfited them. Primus had arrived at Saxa Rubra, when he learnt the destruction of the Capitol, the repulse of Cerealis, and the revived efforts of the Vitellians, who were arming the populace and the slaves. Vitellius himself had come forth in public, had harangued the citizens, and sent them forth *to defend their country* : he had convened the senate and appointed envoys to treat in the name of the republic. It was not a time when the voice of argument could be heard on either side, least of all, the sage maxims and gentle exhortations of a teacher of philosophy, such as the stoic Musonius, who mingled unbidden with the deputation to Primus, and harangued the soldiers in their ranks on the blessings of

peace and the pains and perils of warfare.<sup>1</sup> From smiles and jeers they would have proceeded to violence, had he not taken wiser counsel, and abstained from his unseasonable admonitions. The Vestals, who bore letters to the general, were treated with due respect; but their petition for a single day for conference was sternly rejected. The death of Sabinus, it was declared, and the destruction of the Capitol, had rendered parley impossible.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed the soldiers of Primus would brook not an instant's delay. They insisted on being led immediately to the gates, and panted for the last death-struggle with the foes whose colours they saw flying from the summits of the seven hills. The Flavian army advanced in three divisions; on the left by the Salarian Way to the Colline gate; on the right through fields and meadows along the bank of the Tiber; the centre occupied the Flaminian road which led direct to the foot of the Capitol. The Vitellians went out to meet their assailants at all points, soldiers and rabble mingled together, without plan or order. But in one quarter only, beside the gardens of Sallust, on the slope of the Pincian, where the Flavians were impeded by narrow and slippery lanes, did they maintain the combat with some spirit, till a party of the assailants, bursting in through the Colline gate, took the defenders in the rear. At the centre and on the right the Flavians carried everything immediately before them, and drove their opponents with slaughter from the Campus Martius into the city. The victors entered pell-mell with the vanquished, for the gates of Rome now stood, it seems, always open, and the combat was renewed from street to street, the populace looking gaily on, applauding or hooting as in the theatre, and helping to

Storm of the  
city, and com-  
bat in the  
streets.

<sup>1</sup> We have last heard of this philosopher as digging in the trench of Nero's Isthmian canal. It seems that he had been restored, as a noble Roman, from exile, under Galba. Tac. *Hist.* iii. 81.: "Miserat se legatis Musonius Rufus, equestris ordinis, studium philosophiæ et placita Stoicorum æmulatus . . omisit intempestivam sapientiam."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 76-81.



drag the fugitives from the shops and taverns for slaughter. The rabble of the city, men and women, half-drunk, half-naked, dabbled in the blood of the dead and dying, or threw themselves into the defenceless houses, and snatched their plunder even from the hands of the soldiers. Rome had seen the conflicts of armed men in the streets under Sulla and Cinna, but never before such a hideous mixture of levity and ferocity; never before had her bastard brood, the worthless mob of the forum, betrayed so flagrantly their contempt for the weal and honour of their country.<sup>1</sup>

Through all these horrors the Flavians forced their way without flinching, and drove the Vitellians to their last stronghold in the camp of the prætorians. The lines of this enclosure were strenuously attacked and desperately defended. The Vitellians had no hope of escape, none of quarter. Intent on the capture of Rome, their assailants had brought with them on their march the engines requisite for a siege, and now set themselves to their last task with determination. They cleared the battlements with the catapult; raised mounds or towers to the level of the ramparts, or applied torches to the gates. Then bursting into the camp, they put every man still surviving to the sword. Vitellius, on the taking of the city, had escaped from the rear of the palace in a litter to the Aventine, where his wife possessed a residence, hoping to conceal himself through the day, and fly in the darkness of the night to his brother's stronghold in Tarracina. But his restlessness could not suffer him to remain there. He returned, under some strange impulse, once more to the palace, and roamed through its now deserted halls, dismayed at solitude and silence, yet shrinking from every sound, and the presence of a human being.<sup>2</sup> At last he was found, half hidden be-

Storm of the  
prætorian  
camp.

Vitellius, hesitating to make his escape, is dragged from his concealment in the palace and slain.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 82, 83.: "Nulla partium cura, malis publicis læti." Dion (lxv. 19.) computes the slain altogether at fifty thousand.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 84.: "In palatium regreditur, vastum desertumque . . . . terret solitudo et tacentes loci: tentat clausa; inhorrescit vacuis." Suet. *Vitell.* 16.

hind a curtain, by a tribune, and ignominiously dragged forth. With his hands bound, his dress torn, he was hurried along, amidst the scoffs of the multitude, and without one voice raised even in pity for his misfortunes. One of the Germanic soldiers meeting him, cut him down at once, in fury, or possibly in mercy. But with the same blow the man had struck the tribune, and was immediately slain by his attendants. Vitellius himself was not mortally wounded, and was reserved for more pain and insult. The soldiers pricked him with their weapons, to urge him on, or stopped him to witness the demolition of his statues, and gaze upon the spot where Galba had fallen: they kept his head erect with a sword placed beneath his chin, flung mud and filth in his face, and smote his cheek with insolent mockery. At last they thrust or dragged him to the Gemoniæ, and there despatched him with many wounds.<sup>1</sup>

*Yet I was once your Emperor*, were the last words he uttered, and the worthiest that have been recorded of him.<sup>2</sup> He was once a Roman General; and to have commanded the legions was to have felt the dignity of a man responsible for the fate of armies and the welfare of the provinces. He was once a Roman Emperor; and to have worn the imperial purple for nine months only, was to fill a space in the world, and leave a name in history. It was for this accident alone, indeed, that the name of Vitellius deserves to be registered in human annals. The frankness and good fellowship allowed him were at best trifling and common-place merits, nor had he the force of character which may render a bad man remark-

Concluding  
remarks on the  
character of  
Vitellius.

<sup>1</sup> Suetonius is particular in describing these insults: "Religatis post terga manibus, injecto cervicibus laqueo, veste discissa, seminudus . . . reducto coma capite, ceu noxii solent, atque etiam mento mucrone gladii subrecto, ut visendam præberet faciem neve submitteret: quibusdam stercore et cœno incessentibus . . . tandem apud Gemonias minutissimis ictibus excarnificatus est." He is repeated by Dion, Eutropius, and Orosius.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iii. 85.: "Vox una non degeneris animi . . . se tamen Imperatorem ejus fuisse." Dion, lxxv. 21.

able. To his indolence, his profligacy, his beastly sensuality, we have overwhelming testimony. He was weak, easy-tempered, unprincipled, unscrupulous; he was selfish and hard-hearted; but the charge of ferocious cruelty made by some writers against him is hardly supported by Tacitus, and the stories regarding it do not always agree together. It is recorded to his credit, that he had spared not only the kinsman of Vespasian, who was to succeed him, but of Otho, whom he had supplanted.<sup>1</sup> Some allowance may fairly be made for the countenance naturally given by his successor to the most disparaging view of his conduct. The account I have followed is circumstantial, and consistent, and I cannot abandon lines so vigorously traced by Tacitus, for the satire and ribaldry of Suetonius and Dion. Indeed the *Histories* of Tacitus, which give the narrative of these times in greater detail than it seems necessary here to follow, are in my judgment more to be relied on than his *Annals*. The pictures he has drawn of Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian, bear the full impress of truth. They exhibit characters aptly moulded by the circumstances in which they are placed, with such a mixture of good and evil as stamps them at once as genuine. Relieved from the painful duty of criticizing and correcting, I have had only to copy them on a smaller scale to the best of my humble ability.

The "Histories" of Tacitus more to be relied on than his "Annals."

The occupation of Rome by a conquering army, citizens in name, but with none of the feelings of citizens in their hearts, was a disaster long and painfully remembered. The utter rout and massacre of the vanquished did not calm at once the passions of the victors. *The war was over, but peace had not recommenced.* Armed bands continued to traverse the streets, without leaders or discipline, insulting or attacking

The Flavian leaders divide places and honours among themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lxxv. 22. Tacitus allows of him (iii. 86.): "Inerat tamen simplicitas ac liberalitas . . . Amicitias . . . meruit magis quam habuit." Vitellius, according to the precise statement of Dion, lived fifty-four years and eighty-nine days; born in Sept. 768, died Dec. 822.



all who displeased them, all whom they chose to regard as their enemies, many who had no other demerit than their respectable appearance. The thirst for blood was soon turned to a lust of plunder, and now, under pretence of searching for Vitellians, or often with no pretence at all, the soldiers broke into private houses, guided by slaves and clients, or even by professed friends of the wealthiest citizens. The chiefs of the Flavian party were unable to restrain these excesses; they were too intent, perhaps, on securing the fruits of victory, to regard them. They had raised the young Domitian to the place and name of a Cæsar, and were now engaged in intriguing among themselves for office under him. The prefecture of the guards fell to Arrius Varus; but Antonius Primus secured the substance of power by obtaining superior influence over the young prince's mind. The slaves and valuables of the palace fell to the share of Primus, who claimed them almost avowedly, as the plunder due to his victory at Cremona.<sup>1</sup> One thing alone remained to complete that victory, the destruction of L. Vitellius, and his faction still in arms in Tarracina. A squadron of horse was sent on as far as Aricia; the infantry of a single legion halted at no greater distance than Bovillæ. This demonstration was sufficient. L. Vitellius surrendered without conditions, and his troops were led disarmed to Rome in a sort of triumphal procession, between the ranks of their captors, scowling at the populace who poured forth to see them, and beheld their humiliation with flippant derision. Their chief was put to death, but the men were only kept for a time in custody; while the embers of civil war were easily stifled in Campania, where the Third legion was quartered as in a conquered country, not so much for the sake of precaution as to gratify a mass of greedy and unruly veterans.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This man seems neither to have obtained nor claimed the character of a Roman at all. It had been portended that Vitellius should fall into the hands of a Gaul, and Primus was born at Tolosa, and known in childhood by the native appellation of Beccus (bec), the beak of a cock. Suet. *Vitell.* 18.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 1, 2.; Dion, l. c.

The death of Vitellius on the 21st of December cleared the field for Vespasian; but the principate of the new emperor dated from the 1st of July, the day when the legions swore to him at Alexandria. The senators hastened to decree him all the honours and prerogatives of empire in one magnificent manifesto, and paid zealous court to his son.<sup>1</sup> Vespasian himself was still far distant; nor, indeed, when the news of his triumph reached him, did he make any precipitate haste to assume in person the honours proffered him. His real dependence was on Mucianus, whom, true and faithful as he knew him to be, he could suffer to assume the airs of one who had conferred an empire he might have seized for himself. The despatches this proud soldier sent to the senate, while yet absent from the city, caused anxiety, and even alarm. The advice he presumed to give on public affairs might at least, it was remarked, have been reserved for his place among the senators; but its tone, in fact, savoured of the camp, rather than of the Curia. All, however, continued smooth externally. The triumphal ornaments were voted to him, ostensibly for the defence of Mœsia. The prætorian insignia were conferred on Primus and Varus; and on the same day a decree was passed for the restoration of the Capitol. The language and demeanour of the senators towards their new chief and his ministers were as fawn-

The principate of Vespasian dates from July 1, 822.

Decree for the restoration of the Capitol.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 3.: "At Romæ Senatus cuncta principibus solita Vespasiano decernit." A brazen tablet with an inscription, purporting to be a fragment of this very decree, is still shown at Rome (see chap. xxxi. Vol. III. p. 381.), but its genuineness is disputed. Orelli does not admit it into his collection. The technical language is no doubt occasionally inaccurate for the time of Vespasian, but it may be regarded as drawn up in the phraseology of an earlier period. Of its external marks of authenticity, I have met with no account, except that Niebuhr declares that the mere inspection ought to satisfy an intelligent inquirer in its favour. *Rom. Hist.* i. 343. note 860. The tenor of the decree is to confer on the new emperor all the executive authority possessed by Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius, before him. If it bestowed special offices and titles, these must have been enumerated in the earlier part of the document, which is wanting.

ing as under Nero. One of them alone, Helvidius Priscus, whose name became afterwards famous, spoke with no intemperate freedom.<sup>1</sup> He proposed that the national temple should be rebuilt by the nation, and Vespasian be asked to assist the good work as the first of the citizens, rather than suffer himself to undertake it in their name; a motion which the senate timidly passed over in silence. The same man, a noted disciple of the Stoics, and already conspicuous for his fearlessness, menaced the delators of the late reigns with prosecution. When, before the close of this busy sitting, a deputation was proposed from the senate to Vespasian, he insisted that the magistrates should appoint the members of it by open vote, choosing on oath those whom they deemed most honourable and best affected to the new settlement of affairs: but such a proceeding, it was felt, would fix a stigma on the bad or suspected, and, after a sharp debate, the courtiers of the late emperors carried the appointment by ballot.<sup>2</sup>

Motion of Helvidius Priscus.

The efforts of the sterner patriots to bring the culprits of the late reigns to justice, as the only way in which they could proclaim their own principles, caused much agitation in the ranks of the nobles, and, coupled with the suppressed irritation of the conquered and the licentious violence of the conquerors, threatened a fresh crisis in the city. The speedy entry of Mucianus within the walls was felt as a relief, and there was a general disposition to appeal to his decision, and sanction all his measures. He began by imposing restraint on Primus and Varus, and making them feel that they had found a master. All eyes were immediately turned towards him; courtiers and senators thronged anxiously around him. He paraded the streets at the head of his armed bands, checked licence with a strong hand, and disposed at his will of the houses and gardens which had become for a moment the prey of the most

Strong measures of Mucianus in the city.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. l. c.: "Eo Senatus die quo de imperio Vespasiani censebant." The whole of these proceedings were the work of a single day.



audacious plunderer. Leaving still to Vespasian the title of emperor, he seized on all the power, and treated even the son of Vespasian as his subaltern. With cruel precaution, he commanded the death of Galerianus, the son of the unfortunate Piso, Galba's colleague for a week, as a possible pretender to the empire; and he was gratified with the suicide of Priscus, the Vitellian prefect of the prætorians, who killed himself from shame and mortification. Asiaticus, the freedman and favourite of the late emperor, was degraded to a slave's death on the cross.<sup>1</sup>

On the 1st of January, 823, ten days after the death of Vitellius, affairs in the city seemed to resume their usual course with the appointment of Vespasian and Titus to the consulship; though the occurrence of stormy weather, which kept the corn-fleets of Africa out at sea, alarmed the people, and caused rumours of a revolt in that important province. Domitian was raised to the prætorship, and he filled ostensibly the first place in the administration; but he was indolent and dissolute, and abandoned himself to intrigue and debauchery. While this young prince's name was affixed to every edict and appointment, the real power in all essential matters remained in the hands of Mucianus. The interests of Vespasian were secured by a general change in the magistracy, both at home and in the provinces, and the emperor is said to have thanked Domitian ironically for not superseding him in his eastern command.<sup>2</sup> Mucianus was not less intent on breaking down the influence of Primus and Varus: he withdrew their best legions from their command, and these he dismissed to the Syrian or German frontier. His utmost vigilance was still required to allay the animosities which were repeatedly breaking out among the soldiers of so many generals in the city, and not less to satisfy the demand excited by their reckless promises. A prætorian guard

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 11. For the splendid fortunes of Asiaticus, see Tac. *Hist.* ii. 95.: "Nondum quartus a victoria mensis, et libertus Vitellii Asiaticus, Polycleotos, Patrobios, et vetera odiorum nomina æquabat." For his infamous compliances, such as popular rumour described them, Suet. *Vitell.* 12.

<sup>2</sup> Dion, lxxvi. 2.

was embodied from among the most clamorous of every army, and many who coveted the pay and indulgences of their favoured service were with difficulty appeased with honours and donatives. The necessities of the government demanded an aid of sixty millions of sesterces, which it was proposed to exact by a forced loan from the citizens; but the decree for raising it was not put in execution. It was used perhaps only as a menace, the dread of which stimulated the people to rally round the government. As Mucianus grew stronger, his acts became more and more vigorous. The consulships promised by L. Vitellius were formally withdrawn from his nominees and given to trusty friends of the victor, and the remains of the martyred Sabinus were honoured with a public funeral. The murder of L. Piso, a cousin of Galerianus, might seem to confirm the power of the new dynasty by removing another collateral pretender; but it affected it with a deep stain. This indeed was not the act of Vespasian, nor even of Mucianus, but of Piso's colleague in the government of Africa, who tried first to engage him in a revolt, and, when baffled by his unambitious modesty, accused him falsely of the attempt, and raised an armed force to despatch him.<sup>1</sup>

Many a herald of victory, eager for reward, had crossed the seas during the winter, to be the first to greet Vespasian with the tidings of his success. They had found him in his quarters at Alexandria, arranging, on the one hand, the plan of his son's operations in Judea, preparing, on the other, for his own descent upon Italy, as soon as the season should admit of embarking his troops. While his fortunes were yet dubious, such had been the anticipation of his success, that Vologesus offered him forty thousand horsemen for the campaign; and it was considered the height of good fortune in a Roman general to have received such an offer from the national enemy, and to be in a condition to refuse it.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 39. 47. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 51.; Suet. *Vesp.* 6. But a few years before, Lucan had ex-

Parthian monarch was desired to tender his alliance to the senate, and informed that peace was already restored to Rome by the hands of the Romans themselves. But, amidst his triumphs, Vespasian heard with vexation of the vices of Domitian, which were throwing a shade over the opening promise of his principate. He seems to have been early apprised that the young man was aiming, vaguely and frivolously indeed, on seizing the empire for himself; and though it was clear that he had neither abilities nor influence for such an enterprise, that he should merely harbour the thought was distressing alike to the prince and to the father. Titus, to whom he now finally committed the conduct of the Jewish war, interceded, before leaving him, for his erring brother, venturing to remind him that friends might be changed with circumstances, but that kinsmen must always remain such, and to warn him that the brothers would not long continue united, if their sire set them the example of disregarding the ties of blood. Vespasian promised to watch over the common interests of his house, and dismissed him to the great struggle which was to make him illustrious among Roman generals. He urged forward the despatch of corn-vessels from Egypt; for Rome was suffering from scarcity. When the ships arrived with their freight, only ten days' consumption of grain remained, it was said, in the city.<sup>1</sup>

With the return of abundance and tranquillity, the first care of the senate was to commence the restoration of the Capitol; for while the temple of Jupiter lay in ruins the fortunes of the empire seemed to suffer an eclipse. This pious work was entrusted, according to ancient precedent, to one of the most respected of the citizens, by name L. Vestinus, who, though only of knightly family, was equal in personal repute to any of the senators.<sup>2</sup> The Haruspices, whom he consulted, demanded

Foundation of  
the new Capito-  
l.

pressed the deepest disgust at the intention imputed to Pompeius of seeking aid from Parthia. "Quid Parthos transire doces?" *Phars.* viii. 331. foll.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 53.: "Equestris ordinis virum, sed auctoritate famaue inter



that the ruins of the fallen building should be conveyed away, and cast into the lowest places of the city, and the new temple erected precisely on the old foundations; for the gods, they declared, would have no change made in the form of their familiar dwelling. On the 20th June, being a fair and cloudless day, the area of the temple precincts was surrounded with a string of fillets and chaplets. Soldiers, chosen for their auspicious names, were marched into it, bearing boughs of the most auspicious trees; and the Vestals, attended by a troop of boys and girls, both whose parents were living, sprinkled it with water drawn from bubbling fountains or running streamlets. Then, preceded by the pontiffs, the prætor Helvidius, stalking round, sanctified the space with the mystical washing of sow's, sheep's, and bull's blood, and placed their entrails on a grassy altar. This done, he invoked Jove, Juno, and Minerva, and all the patrons of the empire, to prosper the undertaking, and raise by divine assistance their temple, founded by the piety of men. Then he touched with his hand the connected fillets, and the magistrates, the priests, the senators, the knights, with a number of the people, lent their strength to draw a great stone to the spot where the building was to commence.<sup>2</sup> Beneath it they laid pieces of gold and silver money, minted for the occasion, as well as of unwrought metal; for the Haruspices forbade either stone or metal to be used which had been employed before for profane purposes. The temple rose from the deep substructions of Tarquinius exactly, as was required, on the plan of its predecessor. Formerly, when this fane was restored under Catulus, it was wished to give greater effect to the cell by placing it on a flight of steps; and it was proposed, not to

procures." Of the man who obtained this unusual honour, strangely enough nothing whatever is known. An Atticus Vestinus is mentioned as consul in 818, and suffering under Nero, *Ann.* xv. 69., but the gens is not known of either, nor whether there was any connexion between them. Comp. Martial, iv. 72.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 53. The ruins of the old building were removed to the foundations, and carted into the low grounds at the foot of the hill. "Haruspices monuere ut reliquæ prioris delubri in paludes aveherentur."

heighten the building itself, which the Haruspices forbade, but to lower the platform before it. But this platform was itself the roof of a labyrinth of vaults and galleries, used for offices and storerooms, and this expedient was pronounced impracticable. Vespasian, more fortunate than his predecessor, obtained permission to raise the elevation of the edifice, which now, perhaps for the first time, was allowed to overtop the colonnades around it, and to fling its broad bulk athwart the *templum* of the southern sky, in which the auspices were taken from the neighbouring summit of the Arx.<sup>1</sup>

In the eyes of the citizens one thing alone might seem wanting on this occasion to their prince's glory, that he should himself be present at the solemnity, and conduct it in person. So natural was it, indeed, to suppose him there, taking the part of an Augustus or a Claudius in the expiation of his country's sins, that it came to be commonly believed that he was actually present, and such is the assertion of some writers of authority.<sup>2</sup> Yet the circumstantial account of Tacitus proves clearly that this was not the case, and the discrepancy is worth noting from the hint it gives us of the causes which have helped to obscure the truth of facts at

The Flavian family begins to be regarded with superstitious reverence.

this period. Vespasian was already assuming in the eyes of the Romans something of the divine character: the Flavian race was beginning to supplant the Julian in their imagination; or rather what was wanting to the imagination was supplied by the spirit of flattery, which represented the hero himself

<sup>1</sup> Tac. l. c.: "Altitudo ædibus adjecta: id solum religio adnuere: et prioris templi magnificentiæ defuisse creditum." For the story about Catulus see Gellius, ii. 10. The *templum*, in the augural sense, was the southern half of the heavens, as observed from the Auguraculum, a spot on the northern summit of the hill. This summit is thirty feet higher than the Tarpeian, and may possibly have commanded a clear view, as was technically required, over the roof of the Capitoline temple. It seems not improbable that the difficulty about elevating the temple arose from the objection to its cutting the horizon, which it required the good fortune of a Vespasian to overcome.

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 8.; Dion, lxi. 10.

and all that concerned him in factitious colours.<sup>1</sup> It began to be affirmed that the marvellous rise of the Sabine veteran had been signified long before by no doubtful omens at home; a Jewish captive, the historian Josephus, had prophetically saluted him as emperor;<sup>2</sup> the *common and constant belief* of the Jews, that from the midst of them should spring a ruler of the world, was declared to have received in this event its glorious consummation. But while the Romans were thus surrounding the object of their reverence with the halo of sanctity, the Orientals had ventured to invest him with attributes more palpably divine. At Alexandria a blind man, one well known as such, so it is pretended, in the city, had thrown himself at his feet and implored him to touch his eyes with spittle; a cripple had entreated him to plant his heel upon him. Both declared that their god Serapis had assured them of the new demigod's power to heal their infirmities. Vespasian, as a blunt soldier, was inclined to laugh at these importunities, but his flatterers urged him to make trial of his growing divinity, and his physicians at the same time encouraged him to believe that the suppliants were only partially blind or lame, and possibly his operation in the way prescribed might have some natural efficacy. At all events, they added, he might gain in reputation by success, while he could not lose by failure. Vespasian, half cynical, half superstitious, put forth his hand and his foot, and when the blind saw and the lame walked, allowed himself easily to be deceived by one of the grossest impostures recorded in sober history. He conceived an immense admiration for the god who had so justly measured his extraordinary powers, and when he went to consult

Miraculous  
cures ascribed  
to Vespasian  
at Alexandria.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 7.: "Auctoritas et quasi majestas quædam inopinato et adhuc novo principi decrat: hæc quoque accessit." Sil. Ital. iii. 594.:

"Exin se Curibus virtus cœlestis ab astra  
Efferet, et sacris augebit nomen Iulis  
Bellatrix gens baccifero nutrita Sabino."

<sup>2</sup> Suet. *Vespas.* 5. Joseph. *B. J.* iii. 8, 9. Comp. Tac. *Hist.* ii. 78.: "Re-cursabant animo vetera omina;" foll.



him in his temple at Alexandria, the priests took care to confirm this devotion by fresh omens of impending greatness.<sup>1</sup>

Vespasian, however, had not loitered on his way to empire in quest of oracles to assure him of it. He had been

Vespasian  
quits Egypt,  
and reaches  
Rome in the  
summer of  
823. detained through the spring of 823 by north-west winds, which prevented navigation at that season, and it was not till the end of May that he was

able to put to sea and direct his course towards Italy.<sup>2</sup> Had he sailed direct to Rome he might yet have reached his destination in time to share in the ceremony on the Capitoline; but reasons of state which have not been explained to us may have determined him to advance more leisurely, and to visit the various spots in Asia and Greece at which vessels usually touched on their way westward.<sup>3</sup> It seems clear that he was not anxious to get quickly to Rome. Possibly he wished his affairs to be well established by Mucianus before his own arrival, and the odium which might attach to the first necessary severities to be partly dissipated. Among these was the execution of the son of Vitellius, whom Mucianus had sacrificed to the interests of the new dynasty. The same minister had set himself sternly against the claims of Antonius Primus to the emperor's special confidence. He would not suffer Domitian to retain him among his companions, and had driven him to leave Italy, and represent to Vespasian in person his merits and their requital. But the letters of Mucianus effectually counteracted the influence he might hope to exercise by personal application. The emperor regarded him with jealousy, and was fully persuaded, on the testimony of many friends, that his arrogance was unpopular among the citizens, as well as dangerous to the stability of the government.<sup>4</sup> If he con-

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 81, 82. Suet. *Vespas.* 7. Dion, lxvi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 81 : "Æstivis flatibus certa maria incipiunt vi. kal. Jun. (die xxvii. Mai) et desinunt viii. kal. Oct. (die xiv. Sept.)," Brotier, in loc.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph. *B. J.* vii. 2. 1.: εἰς Ῥόδον διέβαινε ἐντεῦθεν . . . πᾶσας τὰς ἐντῷ παράπλῳ πόλεις ἐπελθὼν.

<sup>4</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 80.

tinued, however, to treat Primus with outward respect, it was perhaps from the apprehensions he could not wholly discard of his own minister. While the affairs of the new dynasty at Rome seemed to be settled firmly, and the capital itself lay prostrate from its exertions and sufferings during two years of agitation, such as it had not experienced since the days of Marius and Sulla, its position in the provinces was by no means equally secure. The services of Mucianus were again put in requisition to stay the defection of a great army in Gaul; but his authority, which threatened to become too great for a subject, was soon happily balanced by the exploits of the heir to the empire in Judea.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

REVOLTS IN THE PROVINCES: THE NORTH-WEST.—CLAUDIUS CIVILIS, UNDER PRETENCE OF SIDING WITH VESPASIAN, INTRIGUES FOR THE SUBVERSION OF THE ROMAN POWER ON THE RHINE.—CRITICAL STATE OF THE LEGIONS, THE AUXILIARIES, AND THE PROVINCE.—DISASTERS TO THE ROMAN ARMS.—CIVILIS BESIEGES THE ROMAN STATION OF VETERA.—MUTINY AMONG THE LEGIONARIES.—SLAUGHTER OF THEIR GENERAL AND DISSOLUTION OF THEIR FORCES.—TRIUMPHANT EXPECTATIONS OF A GALLO-GERMAN EMPIRE.—CAPITULATION AND MASSACRE OF THE GARRISON OF VETERA.—MOVEMENT OF THE FLAVIAN CHIEFS FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE PROVINCE.—CAMPAIGN OF CERIALIS, AND DEFEAT OF CIVILIS.—GRADUAL SUPPRESSION OF THE REVOLT AND SUBMISSION OF CIVILIS.—STORY OF JULIUS SABINUS, AND FINAL PACIFICATION OF GAUL. (A. D. 69, 70. A. U. 822, 823.)

THE Romans, it will be remembered, did not turn their arms against one another in the greatest of their civil wars, till Cæsar had reduced the West and Pompeius the East to entire submission. During the twenty years of the struggle between the senate and the people the provinces lay in perfect repose. While the blood of their conquerors was flowing in torrents, while their garrisons were withdrawn from the frontiers to the heart of the empire, while the commonwealth itself lay prostrate with exhaustion, the conquered made no effort to regain their independence; even the nations beyond the border looked on in silent amazement. Far different was the condition of the Roman states when the fears, the indignation, or the selfish ambition of Galba, and Galba's rivals and successors, once more marshalled the legions in mutual conflict. At either extremity of their wide dominions, in the

Formidable revolts in the provinces.



north-west and south-east, there arose at this period formidable revolts against the rulers of the nations; nor were they repressed without the employment of great military resources and the effusion of much Roman blood. The wars I have now to relate are interesting—one of them most deeply so—in their character and results, and it will be important to observe the pertinacity with which the conquerors still maintained their attitude in the face of their foreign subjects, at a moment when all their energies seemed tasked to keep erect the frame of their government at home.

The country of the Batavi, the island between the channels of the Wahal and the Old Rhine, scarce rose above the surrounding waters; the beds of its broad rivers had not been raised by the Alpine débris which have strewn them for eighteen ages since; but neither had its plains been protected from sea and land floods by lines of artificial embankment. A natural delta, like that of the Nile or Ganges at the present day, intersected with innumerable channels, streaked with lakes and stagnant pools, covered with rank grasses and tangled brushwood, formed the strip of neutral land which the Romans allowed to intervene between their province and the lair of yet untrodden barbarism. This wilderness was perhaps too difficult to conquer, too inhospitable to colonize; but, on the other hand, the wants of its inhabitants, who depended for everything but meat and fish upon their more civilized neighbours, rendered them amenable in some degree to Roman influence; nor did they refuse to acknowledge their dependence by serving the Roman government with their arms and paying it a nominal tribute. The Batavi, an offshoot of the great nation of the Chatti, were a tribe of horsemen, and their gallantry in the field and skill in riding and swimming on horseback made them useful auxiliaries in the German campaigns. One of the most conspicuous of their chiefs at this period was Claudius Civilis, whose name seems to indicate that he had attached himself as a client to the imperial family, and perhaps attained the distinction of

Civilis, the chief of the Batavi, resents his injurious treatment by the Romans.

Roman citizenship.<sup>1</sup> This man now commanded a cohort of his native cavalry in the service of Rome; but a brother named Julius Paulus had been beheaded for some act of insubordination, and Civilis himself transported to Italy, and cast into a dungeon there, in the latter days of Nero. Galba, however, had released and sent him home, where the legions, indignant at such favour accorded to a rebel, again demanded his punishment, and he was only saved by the policy of Vitellius, afraid, it would seem, of irritating a restless ally in the rear of his base of operations. But the Batavian was already beyond the power of soothing: he saw the Romans intent only on mutual slaughter; he beheld the garrisons of the Rhenish frontier moving, by troops and battalions, southward; he felt from his own haughty indignation that the name of Rome was odious to Gauls and Germans alike; and he burned to employ the skill and conduct learnt in the camps of the conquerors, for the subversion of their power, and the revenge of public and private wrongs.

The moment for this revolt was sagaciously chosen. The strength of the Germanic legions had been drained off into Italy, and though we shall still meet with the names of the First, the Fifth, the Fifteenth, and the Sixteenth in the Lower, and of the Fourth, the Thirteenth, and the Eighteenth in the Upper Province, we must regard these as mere skeleton battalions, denuded of their best men and most experienced officers.<sup>2</sup>

Reduced  
strength of the  
legions. Dis-  
satisfaction of  
the Belgic  
tribes.

<sup>1</sup> Civilis is called Julius, Tac. *Hist.* i. 59., but Claudius, iv. 13. I have adopted the name most commonly given to him by modern writers. The Claudian emperors were themselves sometimes designated as Julii, from the house into which they were adopted.

<sup>2</sup> Comp. Tac. *Hist.* i. 55. 59., iv. 24. The history of the disposition of the Roman legions, during the three centuries that we have traces of it, is one of the most intricate problems of antiquity. Marquardt (in Becker's *Handbuch*, iii. 2. 352.) has treated the subject elaborately: he refers, however, sometimes to critics whom I have not been able to consult, and I do not always comprehend his processes. The reader must remember that the skeleton or *dépôt* of a legion, the strength of which was drafted off to a distance, might still retain its name in its original quarters. Sometimes in such cases the legion was split

Moreover, Galba had been obliged to buy the support of the Roman residents in Gaul by the establishment of a new colony, Augusta of the Treviri on the Moselle, at the expense of the native landowners; and not among the Treviri only, but throughout the Belgic tribes, deep dissatisfaction had been created by the exactions with which he had pampered his ill-disciplined armies and replenished his empty treasuries.<sup>1</sup> The spirit, indeed, of the unarmed provincials was too thoroughly cowed by the terror of the Roman name, or their strength too much broken by the constant drafts made on their youth for distant service, to allow them to rush into the field against their masters; but we may believe that they were prompt in aiding their revolted compatriots with supplies and secret information.

The man who flung this bold defiance at the conquerors, ventured, it was said, to compare himself with Hannibal and Sertorius, who both like him aspired to overthrow the Romans by the arms of their own subjects, and both like him were rendered terrible to the beholders by the loss of an eye.<sup>2</sup> Hannibal crossed the Alps to bring succour to the Gauls and Samnites; Sertorius brought the guerillas of Spain to support the cause of the Marians at Rome. Civilis, at the instance of Antonius Primus, pretended to raise Vespasian's standard against the forces of Vitellius on the Rhine, but among the trustiest of his own

Civilis spreads  
disaffection  
among the  
Gaulish states.

into two, and the supplemental division received a distinguishing title, such as Gemina. According to the arrangement of Augustus, there should have been four legions in the Upper and the same number in the Lower Germania; thus we find in the year 767 legions ii., xiii., xiv., xvi. in the one, and i., v., xx., xxi. in the other. (Tac. *Ann.* i. 37.) Of these, ii. and xiv. had been transferred to Britain, and replaced by iv. and xv. The xx. and xxi. have disappeared, and instead of them we find the xviii. only.

<sup>1</sup> The date of the Roman colony at Augusta Trevirorum can only be fixed approximately. Steininger (*Gesch. der Trevirer*, p. 83.) ascribes the foundation, with great probability, to Galba, referring to the statement of Tacitus, *Hist.* i. 53. Comp. Suet. *Galb.* 12.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 13.: "Sertorium se aut Hannibalem ferens, simili oris dishonestamento."



associates he had already thrown off the mask. He had summoned the chiefs of the Batavian and kindred tribes to a national banquet in the solitude of a sacred grove. He had excited them to the utmost with wine and clamour, and inflamed their passions by appeals to their fear, hatred, and revenge. The name of the old national religion was invoked. Sacrifices were performed, oaths were interchanged and ratified by savage rites, such as their masters had proscribed, and vainly endeavoured to suppress. The Frisians, to the north of the Rhine, and the Caninefates, who occupied a portion of the island, joined in the projected insurrection, and were the first to rise. With a prompt and bold movement they dislodged the slender battalions stationed within their territories, and destroyed or captured the flotilla which secured the passage and navigation of the river. As soon as a national standard was raised, several squadrons of German and Gallic horse went over from the Roman camps; but the chiefs of the legions were in fact well disposed towards Vespasian, and while they made this outbreak a pretext for retaining their troops in Gaul, in spite of the urgent summons of Vitellius, who was now calling for every man and horse for service in Italy, they were in no haste to crush a movement which still bore at least the name of a diversion in favour of his rival. A few precious moments were thus gained to the insurgents. Civilis felt himself strong enough to avow his real objects. He dismissed his Gaulish prisoners, with injunctions to raise their friends and kinsmen for the liberty of Gaul, and proclaimed openly that the dominion of Rome was about to pass away, when the arms of the provincials, so long employed against their own independence, were raised once more in the cause of right and of nature.<sup>1</sup> A mutiny of the auxiliaries had never yet occurred in the Roman camps; such had been the good fortune, or such the dexterous policy, of the imperators. When at last it came, it took the Romans completely by surprise, and never certainly were they less pre-

Threatened  
mutiny of the  
auxiliaries.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 17.

pared, either in material or moral resources, to confront it. It was the policy of these conquerors, such at least as we can trace it at a later period, to employ on each frontier auxiliary battalions drawn from distant provinces rather than from the immediate neighbourhood. On the Rhine, however, the aggressive operations of Germanicus and Corbulo had caused a rapid consumption of new levies, and it was necessary perhaps to furnish the legions with an unusual proportion of native recruits. But these armies had now for some years been confined within their lines; the soldiers, Roman or Gallo-German, were not actively employed: the consequence had been a general relaxation of discipline among both classes, and the auxiliaries more particularly had become, we may suppose, dissatisfied in the consciousness of their real strength, and the inferiority of their position. Many circumstances had contributed to abate their respect for their masters. The officers had grown old in this distant service, and exercised their authority with feeble hands; the central government itself, impoverished by the extravagance of the Cæsars, no longer maintained its administration with its ancient vigour and precision on the frontiers, while the knowledge widely spread of the confusion which reigned in Italy created a general feeling of restlessness and expectation of change throughout the provinces.

Conscious of these elements of danger Hordeonius Flaccus, the commander of the Upper province, who had been left with the chief authority over all the forces of the empire in those regions, apprehended at once the full peril of the crisis. While still halting between the two Roman factions which divided his camps, he saw that the blow impending was aimed equally at both, and though he had at first given some countenance to Civilis, as a presumed Flavian partisan, he was now anxious to crush the rebel, whatever might be the service he should thus be doing to Vitellian interests. From his headquarters, placed, we may suppose, at Moguntiacum, he directed Mummius Lupercus, at the head of two legions, in the

Civilis defeats a Roman force in the island of the Batavi.

Lower province, to cross the Wahal, and give the insurgents battle in the heart of their island.<sup>1</sup> Lupercus was not wanting in energy; he effected the passage of the river; but while his right wing was flanked by the lukewarm battalions of the Ubii and Treviri, he incautiously allowed his left to be guarded by a detachment of Batavian horse, who accompanied him with the deliberate intention of deserting in the midst of his first engagement. Civilis, who seems to have purposely allowed his assailant to get into the island, came forward with alacrity to the encounter. The Ubii and Treviri fled at the first shock: the Romans were unable to hold their ground, but they managed to recross the river in decent order, and throw themselves into the fortified camp of *Castra Vetera*, one of the military stations which Drusus had planted on the Lower Rhine.<sup>2</sup> The Batavians went over to him at the critical moment.

This check was rapidly followed by another disaster. Eight Batavian cohorts had been summoned to Rome by

<sup>1</sup> *Moguntiacum* (Maintz) was the capital of the Upper Germania. The frontier of the two German provinces (so called from the numbers of that people transplanted into them from the right bank of the Rhine) has been variously drawn. A recent critic (Böcking, on *Not. Dign.* ii. 483.) has fixed it to the river Nahe (Nava), which enters the Rhine just below Bingen. See also Marquardt, in Becker's *Handbuch*, iii. 1. 91. The Nava was still an important landmark in the fourth century. Comp. Ausonius, *Mosell.* 1. foll.:

“*Transieram celerem nebuloso flumine Navam . . .*”

I step aside to show, in the lines that follow, how much poetical feeling lingered even at that time among the imitators of the antique literature. We, children of the mist, may sympathize with the admiration felt by a stranger from the Atlantic coast for the dry and clear atmosphere of the Rhine valley:

“*Purior hic campis aer, Phœbusque sereno  
Lumine purpureum reserat jam sudus Olympum. . . .  
Sed liquidum jubar, et rutilam visentibus æthram,  
Libera perspicui non invidet aura diei.*”

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 18. *Castra Vetera* is supposed to be Xanten near Cleves. “Great quantities of Roman remains have been dug out on that spot.” Greenwood, *Hist. of the Germans*, i. 150., from Cluverius, *Germ. Ant.* p. 412.



Vitellius, and were already far advanced on their march through Gaul, when a courier from Civilis overtook them with pressing solicitations to join the cause of national independence. Their part was at once decided; but, in order to veil their disaffection and secure the means of reaching their armed countrymen in the North, they refused to move further to the southward, under pretence of requiring certain gratifications promised them, as they alleged, by Vitellius. Hordeonius, anxious and perplexed, granted at once what they demanded; but they immediately raised their demands, till they knew they could not be conceded. Refused, they openly declared that they would join Civilis at all hazards, confiding perhaps in the signs of weakness manifested by their commander. Hordeonius was indeed at a loss what course to take. At first he proposed to employ force, and march against them; again he shut himself up in his camp and would have let things take their course. His officers urged and almost compelled him to act, and at last he ordered Herennius Gallus, legate of the First legion, to close the road northward at Bonna, where he was stationed. At the same time he announced that he was about to follow the revolted squadrons in person, and co-operate with Gallus in crushing them between the two divisions of his army. Once more, however, the prefect abandoned his bolder counsels: the Batavians approaching Bonna sent to parley with Gallus, who, deserted by his chief, hesitated to interpose. Nevertheless his legion rushed forward to the combat, and might have overpowered the advancing Batavians, but for the defection of their Belgic auxiliaries. A third Roman force was thus beaten with disgrace, and driven behind its ramparts. Passing rapidly before the encampment, and leaving the Colonia Agrippinensis on their right, the victorious Batavians pressed resolutely forward, and with no further check effected a junction with the battalions of Civilis.<sup>1</sup>

Further disasters of the Romans.

The forces of the Gaulish champion now assumed the pro-

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 19, 20.

portions of a regular army; but though the liberty of Gaul and Germany was the common watchword of the confederates, he still chose to represent himself in parley with the Romans, as a partisan of Vespasian.<sup>1</sup> He invited the legions of Vetera to take the oath to the same emperor to whom, as he declared, he had sworn his own auxiliary detachments. But the Romans under Lupercus were faithful to Vitellius: they replied to the summons of the Batavians with indignant menaces, repaired their defences, and awaited the onset of his barbarians. They destroyed the town which had grown up beneath the walls of their encampment; they stored their quarters with provisions pillaged from the country round, and resorted to all the means of military science to repel the attack of an enemy, well armed, well trained, and ably handled. The rebels assailed, the legionaries defended the camp with equal skill and obstinacy, but while anxiously expecting aid from their general, the Romans succeeded in maintaining their fortified position. One legion indeed, the Eighteenth, was despatched from the Upper province under Dillius Vocula; but Hordeonius still hesitated to put himself in motion. His own soldiers grew impatient, indignant, insubordinate. Letters reached him from Vespasian, inviting him to join his faction; but uproar spread through the ranks, and he could only read them in public in order to reject and condemn them, and send the courier who had brought them in chains to Vitellius.<sup>2</sup>

Active operations were necessary to confirm this pretence of zeal. Hordeonius began at last to march. At Bonna he was met by the reproaches of the defeated legionaries, who ascribed their disaster to his inactivity, or even to his bad faith. In reply, he recited the letters he had written to all parts of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, demanding assistance; and, to prove his author-

Civilis beleaguers the Roman station of Castra Vetera.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 21.: "Civilis, justī jam exercitus ductor, sed consilii ambiguus . . . cunctos in verba Vespasiani adigit."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 21-24.

ity, caused one of the murmurers to be put under arrest. From Bonna he proceeded to Colonia, the appointed rendezvous of the auxiliaries he had summoned to the standards of Vitellius. But the soldiers, full of ardour themselves, were disgusted with the weakness or treachery of their leader, and compelled him to relinquish the command to Vocula, whose promptness and fidelity seemed equally beyond question. This insubordination, however, as usual, was the harbinger of ill-success. The Roman forces, as they advanced towards Vetera, were harassed by scarceness of provisions; their pay was irregular; the distant states of Gaul were slack in remitting to them the men and money they required; the waters of the Rhine fell so low that their vessels could with difficulty continue their route down the stream, and the terrors of superstition, which beheld in this drought the anger of the gods, aggravated the hardships of their situation. Vocula now joined his forces to the Thirteenth legion at Novesium; but not feeling himself sufficiently strong to attempt the relief of Vetera, he employed and sought to animate his men with camp-exercises, and by the plunder of the Gugerni, who had taken part with Civilis. The hostile Germans were watching these proceedings from the other side of the Rhine. A vessel laden with corn happened to take ground in the shallow channel, and they prepared to bring it over to their own bank. Gallus, who had been left in camp at Gelduba, while Vocula was engaged in his foray, observing this movement, sent a cohort to prevent it. The Germans received succours, and a skirmish ensued, in which they gained the advantage, and succeeded in carrying off their prize. The beaten legionaries imputed ill-faith to their commanders; they dragged Gallus out of his tent, tore his robes, and struck him with many blows, demanding what price he had received for his treachery, and who were his associates in it. Thence they turned upon Hordeonius, who still remained, though divested of authority, in the camp, and threw him into chains, from which he was not released till Vocula's return. This chief had the power to restore obedi-



ence. He put the ringleaders in the mutiny to death. Such was the rapid change of feeling among the soldiers; so easily were they excited to sedition, so promptly restored to the instinct of military submission. While, in fact, the officers were for the most part well disposed towards Vespasian, as a brave and able captain, whose reputation pronounced him worthy of leading them, the men were generally attached to Vitellius, whom they knew, and liked perhaps for his largesses, or his remiss discipline. But as long as they could be made to believe that their chiefs were faithful to this favourite, they consented to execute their orders and endure their chastisements.<sup>1</sup>

The great mass of the German tribes, on either side of the Rhine, now attached themselves to the fortunes of Civilis; and a general attack was made, by his direction, upon the unfortunate Ubii, whose long fidelity to the Romans rendered them hateful to their less pliant compatriots. Their country between the Rhor and the Rhine—from Juliers to Bingen—was ravaged with fire and sword, except where it was under the immediate protection of the Roman garrisons; but the strong defences of Colonia defied the fury of the barbarians, and Civilis now collected all his energies for pressing the siege of Vetera, which he had kept throughout under strict blockade. The Batavians were charged with the service of the battering machines: the Germans from the right bank, more impetuous, and whose lives were held perhaps cheaper, were destined for the assault on the entrenchments. A furious attack was made; but the defence was steadily maintained, and through the darkness of the night, illumined only by the glare of torches and blazing ruins, both parties exhausted every effort of skill and bravery, till the despair rather than the science of the Romans gained the ascendancy. Civilis resumed the blockade, and contented himself with attempts to corrupt the enemy who had baffled his arms.<sup>2</sup>

The siege of  
Vetera turned  
into a blockade.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 25–27.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 30.

Such was the posture of affairs on the banks of the Rhine, when late in the autumn accounts arrived of the defeat of the Vitellians at Cremona, the proclamation of Vespasian by Primus, and the invitation of Cæcina to the remnant of the beaten party to accede to this change of government. Envoys sent to Civilis on the part of Vespasian. Hordeonius once more took upon himself to play the part of general, and required his legions to swear to the new Emperor. The Gaulish auxiliaries, indifferent in truth to either chief, made no difficulty in obeying; but the legionaries still hesitated. At last, when constrained to acquiesce, they pronounced the oath slowly and reluctantly, and slurred over the name of Vespasian with indistinct murmurs. From the Roman camps the envoys of Primus passed to the lines of Civilis, and claimed him as their master's avowed ally. The Batavian replied at first evasively; but the envoys were themselves Gauls, and he was emboldened, on further intercourse, to open to them the real object of the armed attitude he had assumed, recounting the sufferings and indignities he had undergone, and invoking them to join him in delivering their common country from the tyranny of the stranger. Their fate, he said, could not become worse than it already was; victory might restore them to liberty. With this he dismissed them, having succeeded, it would seem, in shaking their fidelity, and at least disposed them to conceal his own avowed hostility.<sup>1</sup>

Trusting that Vocula would be thrown off his guard by the false report of these emissaries, the Batavian now prepared to strike a furious blow. Still keeping watch in person before Vetera, he detached a body of picked troops, who, after surprising a Roman squadron in its quarters at Asciburgium, presented themselves before the camp so suddenly that Vocula had not time to make the usual address to his men, nor even to draw them out in battle array.<sup>2</sup> In such emergencies the Roman

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Asciburgium, perhaps the modern Asburg, between Neuss and Xanten (Novesium and Vetera). Smith's *Dict. of Class. Geography*.

tactics allowed of but one manœuvre: the legionaries were mustered rapidly in the centre, the auxiliaries hastened to occupy the space on their flanks. From between the ranks of these ill-formed battalions the cavalry charged the foe; but the Germans received them with steady valour, and drove them back on their own lines. The Romans were shaken by the rebound, and cut down by the advancing Germans with great slaughter: at the same moment the Nervian cohorts went over to their countrymen, and left one flank of the legionaries unprotected. Assailed on two sides, the troops of Vocula broke and fled, leaving their colours behind them, and were chased to their entrenchments. The day would have ended in the destruction of the routed army, but for the arrival of some cohorts of Vascon auxiliaries, whose slender strength was unknown to the excited victors, and whom they supposed to be the van of a long column from Novesium or Moguntiacum. The Germans were ultimately driven back, with the sacrifice of their most forward warriors; but their horsemen carried off the standards and captives. The Romans lost the greater number in the action, but the Germans lost their best men.<sup>1</sup>

Civilis and Vocula had both made mistakes. The one ought to have supported so daring an attack with a larger force, in which case the appearance of a few auxiliaries would not have turned the fortune of the day: the negligence of the other, and the ease with which he had suffered himself to be deceived by imperfect information, were unpardonable; nor did he now take advantage of his assailant's discouragement to raise the blockade of Vetera. Civilis had notified to the besieged that he had gained a great victory: they might the more readily believe him when they saw the captives and the standards he paraded before their walls. But one of the prisoners exclaimed with a loud voice that the Romans were really the conquerors; and though the brave soldier was im-

Success of the  
Romans, and  
momentary re-  
lief of Vetera.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 33.



mediately cut down by his captors, his countrymen took heart from the assurance thus conveyed to them. At the same moment the flames of burning villages betokened the advance of the legions to their relief. Vocula, on arriving at the spot, ordered his men to entrench a camp for their baggage, preparatory to the attack; but they were impatient of labour and eager for the fray, and with menacing cries compelled him to launch them, in loose marching order, upon the enemy. Civilis received them gallantly: he trusted to the blunders of his assailant as much as to his own prowess. The mutinous Romans had lost, indeed, with their discipline no slight portion of their courage. They would have been speedily overpowered; but, at their cry for succour, their besieged comrades poured forth, and the brave Batavian happening to be thrown to the ground by his horse falling, both sides believed him slain. The Germans paused in consternation; the Romans redoubled blow on blow with renewed vigour. Vetera was effectually relieved; but Vocula again neglected to follow up his victory, contenting himself with strengthening the defences now no longer threatened. He was suspected, nor, it is said, unjustly, of a corrupt understanding with the enemy. Though he strengthened the works of Vetera, he drafted a thousand men from the legion which held it, and withdrew his forces successively to Gelduba and Novesium. Want of provisions may have urged him thus to reduce the garrison, for the country was ravaged far and near, and the Germans commanded the stream of the Rhine. Moreover the baggage and crowds of sick, wounded, and unarmed, who were to be removed to the safer station of Novesium, required a considerable escort; and finally great numbers of the garrison demanded imperiously to be relieved from the hardships they had so long endured within the lines, while those who were left behind complained that they were deserted.<sup>1</sup>

The forces of Civilis closed once more round the devoted

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 34, 35.

entrenchments, while Vocula made the best of his way to Gelduba and Novesium. He gained the advantage in a skirmish of cavalry on the way, but this success did not improve the temper and conduct of his unsteady battalions. When divisions from several legions were reunited at Novesium, hearing that treasure had been sent to the camp by Vitellius, they combined to demand a donative. Hordeonius consented to surrender the contents of his chest, but only in the name of Vespasian. The soldiers divided the money, ate and drank, filled the camp with uproar, met in crowds at night, and finally, remembering their old grudge against their general, burst into his tent, dragged him from his couch, and slew him. Vocula would have suffered the same fate, had he not escaped in the garb of a slave. Left without a commander the soldiers lost all discipline. They sent some of their officers to implore aid from the Gaulish states; but in the meanwhile the army itself broke up into sections; the men of the Upper province separated themselves from those of the Lower; both retreated, or rather fled in disorder before Civilis, who was hastening to attack them. Some cohorts insisted on replacing the images of Vitellius in the Belgian camps and cities, though Vitellius was now known to be dead. Finally the men of the First, the Fourth, and the Eighteenth legions, who belonged to the army of the Upper province, put themselves again under Vocula's orders, and allowed him to lead them to the relief of Moguntiacum, which was surrounded by a swarm of Germans from the Mayn and Neckar. That important post was thus saved to the empire. But the barbarians had spread themselves far inland on the left bank of the Rhine, and the Treviri, abandoned by their Roman defenders, were obliged to fight for their own homes, and protect their country with a long line of wall and entrenchment.<sup>1</sup>

Further minuties, slaughter of Hordeonius Flaccus, and break-up of a Roman army.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 36, 37.: "Loricam vallumque per fines suos Treviri struxere." The lorica, in this place, as I understand it, a continuous wall running along the ridge of a mound, is well illustrated from Q. Curtius (ix. 4.) by Steininger, *Gesch. der Trevirer*, p. 187.: "Angusta muri corona erat: non pinnæ

Had the news of Vitellius' death reached the seat of war a little sooner, the great fortress of Moguntiacum, the firmest stronghold of the Roman power in the North, would in all probability have been lost. When Antonius Primus, a Gaul of Tolosa, standing amid the ruins of the Capitol, proclaimed that the empire had passed away from the puppet of the Rhenish legions, there arose a cry throughout the Transalpine province that Rome's conquering destiny was broken, and the shrine of her invincible gods, which the Gauls, when they burnt the city, had been unable to storm, had fallen by the hands of the Romans themselves. The outposts of the empire on the Danube, it was affirmed, were besieged by the Dacians and Samatians: a great revolt was announced in Britain: the Druids, raising once more their venerable heads, declared that the dominion of the world was passing to the Gauls, to the race whose conquering hordes had peopled Britain, had occupied Spain, had colonized Italy, overrun Greece, and founded states under the shadow of the Caucasus.<sup>1</sup> It was pretended moreover that certain Gaulish chiefs, whom Otho had armed against Vitellius, had vowed, should Roman affairs fall hopelessly into confusion, *not to be wanting* to the liberation of their country.<sup>2</sup>

Triumphant  
anticipations  
of the revolted  
Gauls.

Before the death of Hordeonius Flaccus nothing had occurred to unmask their secret anticipations. But when the legionaries had actually slain their general, when the provincials, abandoned by their protectors, were forced to cling together for their own defence, Civilis felt that his time was come, and

Civilis commu-  
nicates with  
disaffected aux-  
iliaries in the  
Roman camp.

(battlements) sicut alibi fastigium ejus distinxerant; sed perpetua lorica obducta transitum sepserat." Steininger, however, himself regards the lorica and vallum as distinct lines of fortification, which he traces along the hills on the left side of the Moselle valley, from near Trèves to Andernach.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 54.: "Captam olim a Gallis Urbem, sed integra Jovis sede mansisse imperium: fatali nunc igne signum cœlestis iræ datum, et possessionem rerum humanarum Transalpinis gentibus portendi, superstitione vana Druidæ canebant." Tacitus has skilfully brought in this account immediately after his narrative of the destruction of the Capitol.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. l. c.: "Pepigisse ne deessent libertati."



began to communicate his views to Classicus, a Gaulish officer commanding a squadron of Treviri. In the conferences between them two other Gauls of distinction took part, Julius Tutor, a Treviran, and Julius Sabinus, a Lingon, who, while conspiring for the independence of Gaul, affected to boast his descent from Julius Cæsar, the bravest of the Romans. These men had frequent meetings at Colonia, but in private, for the Ubii generally retained their fidelity to Rome. They sounded the disposition of the auxiliaries, and of the tribes around them, and pledged themselves to the liberation of their common country, convinced that when once the passes of the Alps were closed against the invader, the Gaulish states might concert among themselves what limits they would set to their power.<sup>1</sup> Then, returning to their quarters, they joined as before the standards of Vocula, who now moved again down the Rhine to succour the troops still blockaded at Vetera. They were only watching their opportunity. Suddenly they quitted the ranks with their divisions, and entrenched themselves at a distance. Neither threats nor entreaties could induce them to return. Vocula was not strong enough to enforce obedience, and retired in perplexity to Novesium. Meanwhile the legionaries themselves wavered in their fidelity. The death of Vitellius, the accession of Vespasian, the disorders of the empire, all combined to alarm them; and, Gauls as they were by birth, or Gallicized by their long sojourn on Gaulish soil, they were persuaded to the crime never before conceived by Roman legionaries, of *swearing the oath of the stranger*.<sup>2</sup> Vocula, driven to despair by this defection of his soldiers, was only prevented by his attendants from despatching himself; but his life was shortly taken by the emissaries of Classicus. The officers next to him in command, Numisius and Gallus, were thrown into chains, and carried to the camp of Civilis. Legionaries

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 55.: "Si Alpes præsiidiis firmentur, coalita libertate, dispecturas Gallias quem virium suarum terminum velint."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 57.: "Ut, flagitium incognitum, Romanus exercitus in externa verba juraret."

and auxiliaries united in one body with the host of Germans and Batavians, and all pledged themselves together to the empire of the Gauls.<sup>1</sup> The garrison of Vetera, the remnant of the army of the Lower province, were once more summoned to surrender. Hopeless of relief, reduced in numbers, and driven to extremity by famine, they accepted terms of capitulation. Their lives were promised them; but they were required to swear the Gaulish oath, and surrender their camp to pillage. After this humiliation they were led beyond the Gaulish lines, still menaced and insulted by their conductors; but at five miles' distance from the scene of their brave defence they were attacked by the faithless foe, and put to the sword. After thus absorbing one Roman army, and utterly destroying another, Civilis cut the long ruddy locks, which he had vowed to let grow untrimmed till he should consummate his vengeance on the enemies of his country.<sup>2</sup>

Capitulation  
and treacherous  
massacre of the  
garrison of Ve-  
tera.

The Roman power was thus suddenly overthrown along the whole bank of the Rhine; and all the camps and military stations of the legions were destroyed, with the exception of Moguntiacum, and Vindonissa at the entrance of the Helvetian territory, which it seems were still occupied by weak and trembling garrisons. A wing of the captured Sixteenth broke away and took refuge in Moguntiacum; the main body was marched under Gaulish colours to the city of the Treviri, and exhibited to the people in token of the complete victory their champions had obtained for them. The German allies of Civilis urged him to destroy the colony of Agrippina, which they justly regarded as a standing menace to their

Civilis seeks to  
form a German  
sovereignty at  
Colonia Agrip-  
pinensis.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 59.: "Juravere, qui aderant, pro imperio Galliarum."

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 55-61. As in his account of the British insurrection, so in this also, Tacitus is generally reticent as to the atrocities committed, we must presume, by semi-barbarians, with arms in their hands, excited by the superiority suddenly acquired over the people before whom they were used to tremble. He adds, however, here a report that Civilis set up some of his captives for his child to shoot at.

nation. But to this measure their chief would not consent. From no motive of humanity, it may be presumed, nor to gain a reputation for clemency, but reserving the place for the central stronghold of his own power; for it was observed that he had never himself pronounced, nor suffered his Batavians to pronounce, the oath to the Gaulish empire, and he contemplated putting himself at the head of a confederacy

His deference  
to the German  
prophetess  
Veleda. of German tribes on either side of the Rhine. With this view he paid court to Velleda, the virgin queen and priestess of the Bructeri, who

dwelt aloof in a tower on the Lippe, and whom they were wont to consult and worship with superstitious awe.<sup>1</sup> To her he had sent Luperus, the choicest of his captives, as a pledge of the triumph she had promised him; slain by his attendants on the way, the Roman general escaped the more solemn sacrifice to which he had probably been destined. Civilis showed no disposition to advance further to pursue or meet the Romans. He was intent on consolidating his authority in the regions his arms had already won. Sabinus, more bold, or more impatient, led his forces into the country of the Sequani; but while affecting to war for the independence of Gaul, he had himself assumed the title of Cæsar, and was surprised to find the people indifferent to what ap-

Julius Sabinus  
defeated by the  
Sequani. peared to them a mere change of masters. Tribe was marshalled against tribe, and the result was

a victory of the Sequani over the Lingones. Sabinus himself showed neither courage nor conduct. Flying from the field at the first turn of fortune, he made his way to a neighbouring farm house, and set it on fire, while he escaped into the woods, to make it appear that he had destroyed himself. The stratagem succeeded; he was supposed to be dead, and soon forgotten by both parties; but we shall

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 61. Comp. *Germ.* 8.: "Veledam diu apud plerosque numinis loco habitam." Not Velleda only, but Aurinia, and other women, had been venerated by the superstition of the Germans as goddesses. "Inesse quin etiam sanctum aliquid et providum putant; nec aut consilia earum aspernantur, aut responsa negligunt." Comp. Cæsar, *Bell. Gall.* i. 50.



presently hear of him again in an affecting story which gives more interest to his name, than, from his character, it deserves.<sup>1</sup>

The Flavian generals had not yet drawn breath from the efforts and anxieties of the war in Italy, when they were appalled by the report of so many legions lost and so many provinces revolted in the North. **Mucianus** may have felt these disasters more bitterly, when he reflected that he had himself encouraged **Civilis** to rise in **Vespasian's** name against the defenders of the empire, and that the **Batavian** had only bettered the lesson in perfidy which he had taught him. But this was not a moment for vain regrets. It was necessary to strengthen by the presence of an imposing force the **Transalpine** states which still leaned to the side of **Rome**. In **Gaul** no Roman forces were left. Two legions of the victorious **Flavian** army, the **Eighth** and the **Eleventh**, were immediately sent forward from **Italy**. These were accompanied by one of the most recently levied of the **Vitellian** legions, the **Twenty-first**. The **Sixth** and **Tenth** were summoned from **Spain**, and the **Fourteenth** recalled from **Britain**. The command of these divisions when combined was assigned to **Petilius Cerialis**, an experienced but not an active general, already known to us from the wars in **Britain**; and **Domitian** himself followed in their rear, to reap the glory of their success, if not to share their perils in person. As soon as it was known that forces so considerable were converging on the theatre of war, the patriotic fervour of the **Gauls** signally abated. Deputies from various states assembled in the territory of the **Remi**, a people who from the first had shown a disposition to acquiesce in the foreign domination. The decision of this congress was quickly taken. The **Treviri** were required to lay down their arms, and seek by prompt submission the pardon which further resistance might render unattainable. **Valentinus**, the envoy from this tribe, who

Fresh forces directed upon Gaul from Rome by **Mucianus** and **Domitian**.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 61-67.

still gave his voice for war, and dissuaded his countrymen from obeying this mandate, lost in arguing and haranguing the time which should have been devoted to active prepara-

The Gauls neglect to defend the entrance into their country.

tions. Civilis was wasting his strength in trifling expeditions; Classicus was supine; and Tutor neglected to seize the passes of the Alps, and guard the gates of Upper Germany. The fairest chance ever offered to a province for recovering its liberty was lost, it would seem, by the inefficiency of its self-constituted champions. While the Gauls were trifling the Romans were acting with an energy which, even at this distance of time, cannot but strike us with awe. Such men were indeed their own destiny. Day by day, and month by month, the legions advanced, tramping eight hundred thousand paces along the marble roads of the empire. They traversed half the length of Italy to the foot of the Alps. There they divided into two bodies; one took the route of the Graian mountains into the heart of Gaul; the other scaled the walls of the Great St. Bernard, alighted on the Lemman Lake, skirted its eastern extremity to Viviscus or Vevay, and from thence, still following the beaten track of four generations of conquerors, climbed the northern ridge of that hollow basin, and descended again to Aventicum in the valley of the Aar. The descent was now easy, and every omen favourable. At Vindonissa the avenging army was met by auxiliaries who had penetrated Helvetia by the passes of the Splügen, and it swept along, in its onward march, allies from Rætia and Brigantia. Thus reinforced, the Twenty-first legion, under Sextilius Felix, entered Upper Germany by the valley of the Rhine.<sup>1</sup> When Tutor sent against it some of the revolted legionaries, who had taken service with the Gauls, these dastardly soldiers returned, with a second treachery, to the eagles again. He retired, keeping clear of

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 70.: "Cum auxiliariis cohortibus per Rætiam inrupere: accepit ala singularium . . . præerat Julius Briganticus." This native chief was, I conceive, from his name, from Bregenz on the lake of Constance. I venture to coin an appellation for his country.

Moguntiacum with its little Roman garrison, and occupied Bingen, where he hoped to be able to maintain himself by breaking the bridge over the Nahe, which flows before it. But the Romans swam or waded the stream, at-  
 tacked him in his unfortified position, and easily  
 routed his disconcerted militia. The spirit of the Treviri,  
 long reduced to inactivity by the policy of their conquerors,  
 was broken by one defeat. Their warriors threw away their  
 arms, and dispersed; their chiefs for the most part hastened  
 to submit. The Vitellian legions, which, after joining the  
 standard of Civilis, had been quartered among them, swore  
 of their own accord in the name of Vespasian, but still re-  
 frained from offering him their arms, and retired moodily to  
 a distance.<sup>1</sup>

Successes of  
the Romans.

At this crisis there seems to have been some delay in the  
 movements of the Romans. Possibly their forces, collected  
 from such distant quarters, were not yet concen-  
 trated. Valentinus exerted all his influence to  
 revive the courage of the Treviri, and assisted  
 Tutor in rallying a remnant of his followers to  
 the combat. Cerialis at last reached Moguntia-  
 cum at the head of a powerful army. Such was his confi-  
 dence in the numbers of his legionary force, that he dis-  
 missed his auxiliaries to their own homes, a token of strength  
 which had great moral effect far and near. He then ascended  
 the valley of the Moselle, attacked and defeated the Trevi-  
 rans in a brilliant action at Rigodulum, and captured Valen-  
 tinus. The colony of Galba opened its gates in mingled  
 hope and fear. The soldiers, intent only on plunder, de-  
 manded that the city, the capital of northern Gaul, should  
 be abandoned to pillage; and Cerialis deserves credit for  
 firmness in disappointing their licentious passions. This vic-  
 tory completed the conversion of the revolted legionaries,  
 all of whom pressed forward, penitent and humble, to salute  
 the triumphant eagles. The Treviri, the Remi, the Lingones,

Petilius Cerialis enters  
Trèves, and re-  
ceives the sub-  
mission of the  
revolted le-  
gionaries.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 70



all the nations in the rear of the Roman camps, had now returned to their allegiance. Cerialis condescended to reason with them on their folly in murmuring against the prudent and paternal government of which he was the minister. He reminded them not only that the career of military honours was open to them, in common with the citizens of Rome itself, but that the tribute they must pay to Rome was not heavier than would be required to maintain their own independence; that under a good emperor, they would enjoy all the benefits of his wisdom and moderation, while under a bad one, as bad there must sometimes be, just as there must sometimes be droughts and famines in the natural world, they at least, as the furthest removed from Rome, would suffer last and lightest.<sup>1</sup> It had been better perhaps to have referred them to their own past history, and convinced them that freedom had hitherto brought them no blessing, had procured them neither greatness of mind nor material civilization; that under the sway of their priests and nobles, they had acquired the vices of the most corrupt, and retained the barbarity of the rudest state of society. Children cannot govern themselves, and the Gauls had shown themselves as incapable of self-government as children.<sup>2</sup>

Civilis and Classicus, now acting together in the crisis of their peril, resorted to artifice, and tried to damp the ardour of Cerialis by representing that Vespasian, according to their private accounts, was dead; that Mucianus and Domitian, without the substance of his authority, were mere shadows; that an opportunity

Operations in  
the country of  
the Treviri.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 74.: "Quomodo sterilitatem aut nimios imbres et cætera naturæ mala, ita luxum vel avaritiam dominantium tolerate."

<sup>2</sup> In the fine speech here given to Cerialis, Tacitus is, in fact, accounting to his own conscience for the selfish tyranny of his countrymen. "Nam pulsus, quod Di prohibeant, Romanis, quid aliud quam bella omnium inter se gentium existent? Octingentorum annorum fortuna disciplinaque compages hæc coailuit, quæ convelli sine exitio convellentium non potest." We must admit in the case of the Romans, as promptly as in our own, that the supineness of the mass of their subjects in the prospect of throwing off the yoke, speaks favourably for its easiness and mildness.

was now offered him, as the chief military power in Gaul, to make himself supreme over the nation: to this they for their parts would make no opposition, content to be left in possession of the Batavian and German territories, on which their own camps were planted. But Cerialis was not to be seduced. He vouchsafed no reply to the rebels, while he sent their envoys at once to Domitian as a pledge of his fidelity. He was now intent on fortifying the positions he had won; but he was not strong enough to prevent the junction of the bands of Gauls and Germans who continued still to flock to the standard of the patriots. Civilis would have protracted the war to await an expected invasion from the eastern bank of the Rhine: but Classicus and Tutor represented the weakness of the Roman forces at this moment, and the policy of anticipating the arrival of fresh succours from Spain and Britain. It was determined to attack without delay the Roman camp, entrenched outside the walls of Trèves, on the further bank of the Moselle. The legions were exposed to imminent danger, for they were taken by surprise, and their commander himself, who had carelessly passed the night beyond the lines, was absent at the moment of the assault. The bridge which connected the city with its suburb, and thence with their camp, was burnt by the assailants. At the same instant their rampart was scaled, some squadrons of cavalry were routed; and great were the havoc and disorder, when Cerialis at last appeared amongst them, and, unarmed and uncovered as he was, by prayers, threats, and almost by main force, stopped their flight, and rallied them to the combat. Amidst the tents and baggage neither Roman nor German leaders could set their forces in array, and for a long time the conflict was maintained pell-mell by personal skill and courage. At last the Twenty-first legion made itself room to form, sustained the broken and yielding masses of its comrades, and gave them time to recover, when the fury of the barbarians received a check, and the historian declares, in an access of unusual fervour, that, by the aid of Providence alone, the victors of the morn-

ing were finally vanquished. By the promptness with which he followed up his success, pursuing the routed Germans and destroying their camp, Cerialis retrieved the reputation his supineness had nearly forfeited. The confederates were attacked in the rear by the people of Colonia, who gave up to the Romans the wife and children of Civilis. The fugitives were harassed, and cut up in all directions. Another danger impended on their flank. The Fourteenth legion was on its way from the shores of Britain. The Caninefates manned their vessels, and put out to sea to intercept it; but these succours reached the land, and the men had been already disembarked and sent forward when their transports were attacked, and sunk or disabled. Some successful skirmishes still kept up the failing courage of the allies, but the toils were closing around them, and step by step they were driven towards the island of the Batavians, the last precarious foothold of the boasted empire of the Gauls.<sup>1</sup>

Once more, and once only, on the auspicious field of Vetera, Civilis turned at bay, and drew forth all his forces for a desperate encounter. The soil in his front was marshy, and he had thrown into it a copious stream of water from the Rhine, by driving a mound obliquely into the channel of the river. Here, he conceived, the greater strength and stature of the Germans, and their skill in swimming, would give them a notable advantage; and so indeed it proved, the battle being long contested with loss and risk to the Romans, whom Cerialis in vain excited by appeals to the pride of each legion in turn, to the Fourteenth as conquerors of Britain, to the Sixth as givers of the empire to Galba, to the legions of the Rhine as bulwarks of the Roman frontier. At last the treachery of a deserter disclosed to him a path in the morass by which a chosen band could surprise the right flank of the enemy. At the same moment a general charge was made on their front, and the Germans, pressed on two sides, were driven

Civilis is defeated before Vetera.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* iv. 77-79.



headlong into the river on their left. Had the Roman flotilla been at hand, their whole force would have been utterly destroyed; but the crisis was still delayed, heavy rains checked the pursuit of the Roman cavalry, and, swimming, wading, or skulking from the field, the routed hordes effected their escape.<sup>1</sup>

Civilis had now crossed the Rhine, and thrown himself into the territory of his German allies, the Chauci and the Frisii. He abandoned the line of the Wahal, and the defence of the Batavian island, and after Civilis crosses the Rhine. carrying off his corn and cattle, cut the dams with which Drusus had confined the ancient channel of the Rhine, and laid the country far and wide under water.<sup>2</sup> Behind this new frontier he still maintained an imposing force, swelled by a crowd of Treviran fugitives, among whom were, it was said, one hundred and thirteen of their senators.<sup>3</sup> The Romans were threatening his position from several points. He divided his troops into four detachments, and attacked them simultaneously at Arenacum, Batavodurum, Grinnes and Vada.<sup>4</sup> Everywhere he was repulsed; but the Romans again had no ships to complete their victory. The Germans, who had probably greater command of the river, made a night attack in boats on the camp at Novesium; and here once more the want of vigilance of Cerialis, who was passing the night in an intrigue with a native woman, had nearly proved

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 14-18.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 19.: "Quin et diruit molem a Druso Germanico factam, Rhenumque prono alveo in Galliam ruentem, disjectis quæ morabantur, effudit. Sic velut abacto amne, tenuis alveus insulam inter Germanosque continentium terrarum speciem fecerat." When Drusus opened the channel into the lake Flevus, he nearly drained the old channel by Lugdunum (alter Rhein), thus effacing the separation between the island on the southern or Gaulish bank and the German continent on the northern. Such seems to be the meaning of a passage which has caused much perplexity to the commentators.

<sup>3</sup> By senators we are to understand decurions of the Roman colony. Steining, *Gesch. der Trevirer*, p. 129.

<sup>4</sup> Arenacum is supposed, from its name perhaps, to be Arnheim. If so, it was not on the Wahal, but on the old Rhine, and the Romans, we thus see, had now occupied the "Island." The other places are quite uncertain.

fatal to the Romans.<sup>1</sup> The Germans made prize of the prætorian galley, in which they hoped to have captured the general himself, and bore it off as an offering to their priestess Veleda. Meanwhile the Romans, who had occupied the Batavian villages between the Wahal and Rhine, ostentatiously spared the private estates of Civilis, and this, with the repeated failure of his operations, threw suspicion on his earnestness in the cause. He had boasted that, should the foe dare to set foot within the island, he would instantly crush them; but this vaunt he did not attempt to execute. The allies had urged him to finish the war by a decisive engagement; but he had restrained their ardour, and divided their forces. The suspicion was not without colour and reason. Civilis was negotiating with the Romans. To them he set forth, it seems, as merits, the very same acts of perfidy with which his countrymen had reproached him. In making terms for himself, he may have stipulated for his people also; and Cerialis was fain to admit the transparent pretence that they had taken up arms, not against the majesty of Rome, but for the empire of Vespasian. Civilis was allowed to rank himself among the partisans of the new government, with Mucianus, Primus, and Cerialis himself. The Germans of the right bank were thus abandoned by the chief they had chosen, and the sullen acknowledgment they made of the superior fortune of the Romans, seems to have been accepted as a submission by their weary and exhausted conquerors.<sup>2</sup> Domitian and Mucianus had not advanced further than Lugdunum on the Rhone, when the news of this pacification reached them, and the young prince

The Romans  
occupy the  
"Island."

Civilis treats  
with the Ro-  
mans.

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus speaks of the camps at Novesium and Bonna, and does not specify on which the attack was made. I should have supposed he meant Bonna, from the mention of the general's paramour, Claudia Sacrata, as an Ubian: but the German boats, he says, *descended* the river, which can hardly be reconciled with a locality so high up the stream.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 23-26.

could return to Rome with his share of laurels, to greet his brother's triumphal entry from Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

The narrative of Tacitus, such as it has descended to us, breaks off in the middle of the speech with which Civilis is supposed to plead his cause with the Romans.

No monument of antiquity remains to inform us of the Batavian's further career, or what faith

The narrative  
of Tacitus in-  
terrupted.

was kept with a foe who had proved himself more dangerous to Rome than Caractacus or Arminius. They had defended their own country against the invader; but Civilis had invaded the empire, and almost succeeded in wresting from it the most precious of its provinces, the nursery of its amplest resources and its bravest auxiliaries. The account our historian has given us of this memorable mutiny—for it is as a military, not a national revolt that we must evidently regard it—seems on the whole, one of the least successful episodes in his history; it leaves but an indistinct impression of the strength of the opposing forces, of the localities, and even the incidents of which it treats; but it fails still more remarkably in representing to us the character of the chief actor in the scene. Civilis, prominent as he was for a moment on the world's stage, prominent as he must always be on the page of history, remains to us a name only. He stands before us without national or personal characteristics, without even the mythical halo

The end of Ci-  
vilis unknown.

which surrounds the figure of Arminius; and we part from him at last quite content to be ignorant of what finally became of him, or whether he was really a traitor, or only unfortunate. Nor do we learn, nor do we care to inquire, what became of his still more shadowy associates, Classicus and Tutor; whether they were included in their chief's capit-

<sup>1</sup> According to Suetonius, Domitian's object in making his expedition into Gaul was to rival the exploits of Titus. It was popularly rumoured that he tampered with Cerialis to get himself proclaimed emperor by the army. His successes, such as they were, gained him at least the compliment of a spirited address in the poem of Silius Italicus (iii. 608.):

“Jam puer auricomo præformidate Batavo.”



ulation, or suffered in the proscription which surely followed, however slight are its traces, of the leaders in the crushed sedition. Upon one only of the names mentioned in this narrative a ray of interest has alighted, from an anecdote preserved by Dion, and related with greater pathos by Plutarch. Julius Sabinus, it has been said, concealed himself after his defeat. He caused a trusty slave to fire his house, and gave out that he had perished in the flames. The story obtained credit, and search ceased to be made for him, while he concealed himself in a cave in a deep forest. To his faithful spouse, Eponina, he contrived to communicate the secret. She joined him in his retreat, and continued there to live with him for the space of nine years, interrupted only by her journeys, even as far as Rome, to consult with his friends, and learn if it might be possible to procure his pardon. In that hiding-place she bore her husband two sons, and at last the whole party ventured to present themselves together to the emperor. Eponina told the affecting story of her conjugal devotion, and showing the pledges of her love, declared that she had endured to bear them in the misery and darkness, that the suppliants for mercy might be the more in number. But Vespasian, it is said, was utterly unmoved. He pitilessly commanded the execution of both husband and wife. Eponina exclaimed that it was a happier lot to die than to live in the guilty enjoyment of his blood-stained sovereignty.<sup>1</sup>

*Such, says an eloquent Frenchman, was the last blood shed for the cause of ancient Gaul, the last act of devotion to a social order, a government, a religion, the return of which*

<sup>1</sup> Dion, lxvi. 3. ; Plutarch, *Amator*. p. 770. It may be some relief to the reader to know that this story, one of the most pathetic in Roman annals, seems liable to great suspicion. Dion intimates that both the husband and wife were sacrificed. Plutarch speaks only of Eponina. There could be no motive for such barbarity towards the contemptible Sabinus, except as a pretender to the blood of the Julii. This feeling would have been as strong against the children as their father; but according to Plutarch, the son certainly survived, and he had himself seen one of them at Delphi, filling probably the official dignity of the priesthood. Yet it is hardly worth while to pluck the story of the individ-

*was neither possible nor desirable.*<sup>1</sup> The narrative now concluded sufficiently shows that national spirit had already become extinct among the Gaulish people. It was not from their own forests, or stockades, still less from their cities, that the last heroes of resistance to Rome had sprung. Civilis and Tutor, Classicus and Sabinus, were all officers attached to the Roman armies; they had learned the art of war under Roman training, and their ideas of national government were only a faint reflex of the Roman. Their aim at self-aggrandizement was hardly in any case disguised; yet the imperfect sympathies of their countrymen were in no wise shocked by it. We trace in their attempt no germ of a self-evolving and self-sustaining power. The two great elements of Gaulish nationality, the nobility and the priesthood, had been absorbed by the spirit of assimilation to Rome. The nobles were content to be centurions and tribunes: the Druids rejoiced in the pensions and titles of Augurs and Flamens.<sup>2</sup> We shall hear no more of either the one or the other. Occasions will occur when Gaul will again play a great part in Roman history; but it will be only the Gaul of the camp. The empire of Rome will be won and lost by Gaulish hands; but they will be the hands of trained auxiliaries, with all the

ual from the mass of suffering which the historian of these times must record, and, with Lucan at Pharsalia, I often mutter, amidst the horrors I have undertaken to relate,

“Mors nulla querela

Digna sua est; nullosque hominum lugere vacamus. . . .

Per populos hic Roma perit.”

<sup>1</sup> Thierry, *Gaulois*, iii. in fin.

<sup>2</sup> Thierry refers to the notices of the professors at Burdigala by Ausonius (iv. x.). In the fourth century the Gaulish priests of Apollo remembered without remorse that they were descended from the priests of Belenus. The number of Gauls we find with sacerdotal names deserves remark. Thus we have Julius Sacrovir, Julius Auspex, Claudia Sacrata. It seems probable that these appellations indicated the Druidical functions or descent of their bearers. Other cognomens, such as Civilis, Tutor, and Classicus, seem to be Gaulish appellations Latinized; at least we shall hardly meet with them among the genuine Romans.

feelings, and even with the title of Romans. We have traced in this history the fall of Gallic independence between the eras of Cæsar and Vespasian: we have seen a great people conquered and extinguished. We now turn to another picture, that of the fall of Jewish independence, protracted through the same period: we shall see there also a great nation conquered and crushed; but the Jews, at least, have never suffered extinction.



## CHAPTER LIX.

MATURITY OF THE JEWISH NATION: ITS MATERIAL PROSPERITY: DISCONTENT WITH ITS POSITION.—RESISTANCE OF BRIGANDS OR FALSE CHRISTS.—TUMULTS IN JERUSALEM CONTROLLED BY THE SANHEDRIM.—INSURRECTION IN GALILEE QUELLED (A. D. 52).—FELIX, GOVERNOR OF JUDEA.—AGRIPPA A SPY ON THE JEWS.—INSURRECTION AND DEFEAT OF CESTIUS GALLUS (A. D. 66).—VESPASIAN TAKES THE COMMAND.—JEWISH FACTIONS: THE MODERATES AND THE ZEALOTS.—JOSEPHUS THE HISTORIAN COMMANDS IN GALILEE.—HIS DEFENCE OF JOTAPATA (A. D. 67).—HE IS TAKEN, AND ATTACHES HIMSELF TO THE ROMANS.—REDUCTION OF GALILEE.—SECOND CAMPAIGN (A. D. 68).—REDUCTION OF PERÆA.—SUSPENSION OF HOSTILITIES (A. D. 69).—ACCOUNT OF THE JEWS BY TACITUS: HIS ILLIBERAL DISPARAGEMENT OF THEM.—REVOLUTION IN JERUSALEM.—OVERTHROW OF THE MODERATE PARTY.—THE THREE CHIEFS OF THE ZEALOTS, JOHN, SIMON, AND ELEAZAR, AND STRIFE BETWEEN THEM.—TOPOGRAPHY OF JERUSALEM.—TITUS COMMENCES THE SIEGE (A. D. 70).—THE FIRST WALL STORMED.—ROMAN CIRCUMVALLATION.—FAMINE AND PORTENTS.—ESCAPE OF THE CHRISTIANS.—CAPTURE OF THE CITADEL.—STORMING OF THE TEMPLE.—BURNING OF THE HOLY OF HOLIES.—FEEBLE DEFENCE OF THE UPPER CITY.—DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.—CAPTURE OF THE JEWISH CHIEFS.—FINAL REDUCTION OF JUDEA.—MASSACRES AND CONFISCATIONS.—TITUS RETURNS TO ROME.—TRIUMPH OVER JUDEA.—THE ARCH OF TITUS (A. D. 44–70. A. U. 797–823).

IN commencing a chapter which will be devoted to the great insurrection of the Jews, ending in the destruction of their city and final subversion of their polity, it will be well to remark the distinction which existed between this people at the period we are considering, and all the other subjects of Rome.

The Jewish nation in the first century in the maturity of its powers.

The victorious republic had never yet, throughout the long career of its conquests, confronted a people in full strength and maturity. The Carthaginians, the Greeks, the Egyptians, and lastly the Gauls, had all passed their prime before the shock came, which broke them against the vigorous ado-

lescence of the republic. But such was not the case with the Jews. After all the losses and disasters inflicted on its political weakness, that extraordinary people was still growing in numbers, still advancing in moral influence. The narrow sphere of its natural frontiers, and the pressure of mighty empires on every side, had checked indeed its territorial extension. From David to Herod the bounds of Jewish occupation were still confined to the *peninsula* of Palestine; but the authority of Jewish ideas had made ample conquests beyond the ocean and the desert.<sup>1</sup> Outside the limits of Palestine the Jews, scattered in every city of the three continents, were not existing merely on sufferance. Strong in numbers, strong in national prejudices, stronger still in the force of their national character, they assumed everywhere an attitude more or less aggressive; not thrusting themselves indeed into political station, not coveting a share of the government, as long as they were suffered to manage their own affairs after their own fashion, but,—stranger, as it seemed, and more irritating,—seeking by all means to sway the minds of those about them, to wean them from their local prejudices, and inoculate them with a moral principle foreign to their own. Urged, apparently, in this unwonted career of proselytism by a blind instinct, they subjected themselves in every quarter to jealousy, and sometimes to persecution, such as had hitherto been almost unknown among heathen societies: but violence they had generally retaliated with equal vigour, till they had acquired in every city, from the Euphrates to the Nile and Tiber, a character, not perhaps wholly merited, for turbulence and seditiousness.

The advance of the Jewish people in material resources, within the limits of their proper country, was not less strongly marked at this epoch. The impetus  
 Its material prosperity. given by the Roman conquests to eastern com-

<sup>1</sup> David and Solomon (century xi. before Christ) had exacted tribute from various tribes as far as the Euphrates and the Red Sea (see 2 *Sam.* viii., 1 *Kings*, iv.); but this was the exercise of a transient authority, and implies no extension of national inhabitancy.

merce must have been keenly felt at the spot to which the traffic of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, converged. The growth of a New City outside the walls of Jerusalem, the creation of traders and manufacturers, indicates a great industrial movement, and the magnificent constructions with which the elder Herod adorned the chief places of his dominions, not increasing, but, on the contrary, remitting at the same time, the burdens of his people, proves the fact still more decisively. Military training, no doubt, was checked among the Jews by the policy of the empire; but their youth were exempted, by special favour, from the ordinary waste of the conscription, and devoted without reserve to the labours of agriculture or commerce. The national heart beat as warmly and truly as ever. The old traditions were held in reverence; the Temple and its services frequented with all the ancient fervour; and in the direction now taken by its religious aspirations we discover a proof of the material prosperity of the nation. Worldly state was the invisible idol of the vacant fane of Jerusalem. The worship of wealth, grandeur, and dominion, blinded the Jews to the form of spiritual godliness; the rejection of the Saviour and the deification of Herod were parallel manifestations of the same engrossing delusion.

The national pride, thus fostered by outward circumstances, in which all classes were involved, was not incompatible with an antique simplicity of manners which bound them together, and gave a healthy vitality to the body politic. The tone of intercourse between the various ranks among the Jews, even in the days of which the New Testament treats, still savours strongly of the patriarchal; their methods of national government, so far as it was free to act, were paternal; more dependence was placed by their rulers on popular patriotism and affection than on strict arrangements of finance or of police; the social relations seem to have been unusually pure, those, above all, of master and servant were natural and kindly; slavery among the Jews was so confined in its ex-

*Its antique  
simplicity of  
manners.*



tent and so mild in practice, so guarded by law and custom, as to become a real source of strength instead of weakness to the commonwealth. The mutual interest which thus bound all classes together became a fulcrum for government, and when at last the nation rushed to arms, doubled the strength of its battalions.<sup>1</sup> The great rising of the Jews against the Romans, which is now to be related, was, beyond any other in ancient history, since the resistance at least of Greece to Xerxes, a common devotion to a common cause. The contest was that of a whole people (not indeed of all its members, but at least of every rank and every order) against a limited number of trained soldiers. The lesson, painful and humiliating, which it teaches us, stands alone perhaps in ancient, but has been repeated only too often in modern annals, that a nation in arms wages an unequal contest with skilful generals, disciplined legions, and abundant military resources.

Whatever were the causes which bound the Jews so closely together, and gave them such confidence in one another, such disregard for the rights and usages of the foreigner, it is important to observe that their spirit of self-assertion was not less manifest abroad than at home. We have seen what disturbances marked their sojourn in Alexandria; we have noticed the devices of expulsion which a mild and favourable ruler was induced to launch against them at Rome. Throughout the Western Empire they were at least controlled with vigour;

Attitude of the  
Jews in the  
West and in  
the East.

<sup>1</sup> Passages in the New Testament will occur to every reader to show how much the Jewish finance depended on voluntary contributions; how large a part the people themselves took in the administration and execution of their laws; how generally the menial was the "hired servant," not the slave of his master. This view of Jewish manners is fully borne out by Josephus. In the medley of classes which jostle together in his account of the insurrection, slaves have no place whatever. I am not sure that the term is so much as once mentioned in it. If I have not specifically alluded to the Mosaic arrangements for the periodical restitution of lands, and the cancelling of debts by personal service, which checked an undue accumulation of property, it is because we know not how far the Levitical law was actually in force at this period.

but in the East they defied the irregular police of the Parthians, made open war against the satraps of Babylonia, united themselves with the Syrians against the Greeks in those regions, and, a bolder and fiercer race than either, secured the victory to the party they espoused; until both Syrians and Greeks combined against them, and routed them with repeated slaughter. The Parthians, it seems, looked on in terror while these strangers, provoking or provoked, inundated their streets with blood. The Jews, worsted in the contest, seized on the cities of Nearda and Nisibis, and there continued to maintain themselves in half-acknowledged independence.<sup>1</sup>

The experience of Alexandria and Seleucia was not lost on the Roman government. The mildness with which the emperors, following the policy of Julius Cæsar, had generally treated the Jewish people, had not secured them against disturbances within the frontiers of Palestine, against the jealousy of its parties or the covert attempts of its princes to arm themselves in anticipation of a revolt. Agrippa was not allowed to complete the defences with which he had begun to encircle the most exposed front of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> This monarch left at his death four children. The eldest, a son, who bore his father's name, was at the time detained at Rome, and had completed his seventeenth year. The others were daughters: Berenice, aged sixteen, was already married to her uncle Herodes, king of the little territory of Chalcis; Mariamne was some years younger, and Drusilla a mere infant.<sup>3</sup> Claudius, ever attached to the traditions of his predecessors, would have sent the young Agrippa to assume his

Annexation of  
Judea to the  
Roman empire.

A. D. 44.  
A. U. 797.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Antiq. Jud.* xviii. 10. These events occurred in the reign of Caligula.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. *Antiq.* xix. 7. 2. Comp. *Bell. Jud.* v. 4. 2., and Tac. *Hist.* v. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Berenice, according to the positive assertion of Josephus (*Antiq.* xix. 9.), was sixteen at the time of her father's death, A. U. 797. At a later period we shall remember this date with some surprise, and may be tempted to suspect the historian of an error.

father's diadem; but he was dissuaded by his ministers, pretending that a prince so young should not be trusted with power, but influenced more probably by the pressure of their friends' solicitations to surrender this wealthy province to the cohort of a Roman governor.<sup>1</sup> Judea and Samaria were now placed by decree of the senate in dependence on the proconsulate of Syria, and Cuspius Fadus was the first officer appointed to govern them, with the title of Cæsar's procurator. But the family of Agrippa, thus summarily disinherited, were treated with outward respect; the first duty enjoined on Fadus was to chastise the people of Cæsarea and Sebaste, for the insults they had vented against the memory of their late sovereign.

Immediately a swarm of Roman officials alighted on the fair fields of the long-promised land. The freedmen and favourites of the court reaped the first fruits of the anticipated harvest. The public revenues of the country were assigned to the imperial fiscus, and thus the interests of the emperor himself were identified with those of his agents and commissioners. The yoke of Cæsar might not be heavier than that of Herod; but it pressed in a new place; the burden, harshly shifted, was felt to be more galling. The priests and nobles murmured, intrigued, conspired; the rabble, bolder or more impatient, broke out into sedition, and followed every chief who offered to lead them to victory and independence. Theudas and Tholomeus, with many others,—brigands as they were styled by the Romans, Christs, elected and anointed by Jehovah, as they boldly proclaimed themselves, pointing to the Law and the Prophets of their sacred books as their title to divine support,—were routed in the field, or hunted through the wilderness, till one after another they were taken and slain.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 9.: "Claudius, defunctis regibus aut ad modicum redactis, Judæam provinciam equitibus Romanis aut libertis permisit."

<sup>2</sup> For Theudas and Tholomeus, see Joseph. *Antiq.* xx. 1. 4. For the "Egyptian," *Acts*, xxi. 38.; Joseph. *Antiq.* xx. 6. 6. The term pseudo-Christ is applied to these pretenders in *Matt.* xxix. 4., and thence adopted by the



Fadus was succeeded by Tiberius Alexander, against whom as a renegade from the national faith the Jews were the more embittered. Yet his defection was more than counter-balanced by the conversion to Judaism of Helena, queen of Adiabene, and her son Izates, whose territory, lying between Palestine and Parthia, might form a convenient link in the chain now secretly forging, to bind in strict alliance together the greatest rivals of Rome and the most reluctant of her subjects. The government of Tiberius was signalized by the capture and execution of Jacobus and Simon, sons of Judas the Galilean; but under Cumanus, who followed him, the populace of Jerusalem itself rose in frenzy against their masters, and the Roman soldiers were let loose with drawn swords upon them, in the midst of the holy season of Pass-over.<sup>1</sup> It was only indeed under extraordinary

Tumults in Jerusalem controlled by the prudence of the Sanhedrim.

provocation that the populace of the Jewish capital, who were generally controlled by the superior prudence of their chiefs, broke into violence in the streets. In the Sanhedrim were many devoted adherents of Rome, and the rest were well aware of the weakness of the national power. All agreed in the sentiment of Caiaphas the high priest, when the multitude seemed ready for a moment to accept Jesus as the Christ: *If we let him alone all men will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation. . . . It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*<sup>2</sup> But the ruder independence of the Galileans was not so easily kept in check. Their tract of heath and mountain was always then, as it has

Fathers of the Church. Josephus calls them *λησταί, ἀρχίλησταί, γόητες, ἀπατεῶνες*, and “false prophets,” but never *ψευδόχριστοι*. He makes no more allusion to the false Christs than to the true Christ. The subject of the Messiah was one he shrank from contemplating in any shape. This may account for his silence about the persecution of the “Christians” by Nero at Rome, even supposing these to have included the turbulent Christ-seeking Jews.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Antiq.* xx. 3. 4. The date is not precisely fixed, but may be A. D. 50 (A. U. 803).

<sup>2</sup> St. John's *Gospel*, xi. 48.; Salvador, *Dom. Rom.* i. 493.

since always been, in a state of partial insurrection. The Roman authorities were constantly engaged in hunting down the banditti, who assumed the title of patriots, and gladly employed against them the local rivalry which nourished perpetual feud between the tribes of Galilee and Samaria. It was necessary for the inhabitants of the northern region to traverse Samaria on their periodical pilgrimages to Jerusalem. On such occasions they seldom escaped without insult, if not actual injury. The armed bands of Galilee would sometimes, in revenge, descend on the homesteads of Samaria, and harry the lands of men whom they accused of too great subservience to the foreigner. The Romans interfered.

Insurrection in  
Galilee quelled  
by Quadratus.

A. D. 52.  
A. U. 805.

Cumanus placed himself at the head of four cohorts with a force of Samaritan militia, attacked Eleazar, the Galilean chief, routed and put his followers to the sword. Again the Galileans rose with redoubled fury; the chiefs of Jerusalem in vain implored them to submit to inevitable fate. The Roman battalions were not always successful in their attacks on these desperate men. The war would have spread from canton to canton, and set the province in a flame, had not Quadratus, the prefect of Syria, interposed with the mass of his forces, trampled down all resistance with ferocious energy, and extinguished the quarrel of the provincial factions in the blood of a multitude of captives. The governor ascribed the disturbance to the rivalry of the Roman procurators. Cumanus presided in Galilee; Felix, the brother of the favourite Pallas, seems to have held independent authority in Samaria. Claudius, appealed to for instructions, left the decision to Quadratus, and he, well aware of the powerful interest of Felix, allowed the punishment, which should have been shared alike by both, to descend upon Cumanus only.<sup>1</sup> The whole territory of the Jewish people was now

Felix governor  
of Judea.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Ann.* xii. 54.; Joseph. *Antiq.* xx. 5-7 (A. D. 52, A. U. 805). There is some discrepancy in these statements, which are not, perhaps, irreconcilable. Of the government of Felix Tacitus had said (*Hist.* v. 9.): "E quibus Antonius Felix per omnem sævitiam ac libidinem jus regium servilli ingenio exercuit, Drusilla Cleopatæ et Antonii nepte in matrimonium accepit."

united under the sway of Felix, who continued to enjoy his power, and accumulate riches, for many years after the death of his patron and the disgrace of his brother.<sup>1</sup> His long reign is marked by repeated mention of the bandits and false prophets still infesting the province; the zeal for independence, rash and futile in its efforts, was still unabated; but in general, from the absence of public events which distinguishes the epoch, the country seems to have enjoyed comparative tranquillity. Claudius, before his death, gave the young Herod Agrippa the tetrarchy of Philip, consisting of some districts beyond Jordan, together with Trachonitis and Batanea. Drusilla was married to a prince of Emesa, a proselyte to Judaism; but Felix, becoming enamoured of her, did not scruple to carry her off from her husband. When he was at last recalled, the Jews took occasion to prefer complaints against him; but he was still protected by Nero, and notwithstanding the wealth he was supposed to have amassed, seems to have lived and died in uninterrupted prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

The discreet and the timid still retained the chief influence in Jerusalem. The Romans had gained many adherents in every rank, especially among the priests and nobles, and divided the masses of the people, while they kept from their sight the young princes, who, as their natural leaders, might have combined them together. But on the frontiers of Syria, at this moment, the elements of commotion were more rife. Every pulsation of national feeling in Parthia and Armenia was communicated through the synagogues on the Tigris and Euphrates, and from station to station across the desert, to

The spirit of disaffection controlled by the vigorous measures of Corbulo.

<sup>1</sup> Felix is supposed to have been procurator of Judea six years under Nero, from A. D. 54 to 60. Such is Salvador's statement; but the precise dates are not indicated by the historians. *Comp. Act. Apost.* xxix. 10. The Romans, it should be observed, gave the official name of Judea to the whole region of Palestine, including, besides, Judea proper, Galilee, Samaria, and Peraea.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus (*Antiq. Jud.* xx. 7. 8.) says that he was protected by the influence of his brother; but Pallas was disgraced as early as 56, though he was not put to death by Nero till 63. Felix had a son by Drusilla, named Agrippa. Joseph. *Antiq. Jud.* xx. 6. 2.



the centres of Jewish life at Jerusalem, Tiberias and Cæsarea. Full of scorn for the unwarlike character of Nero, full of hope in the unappeased discontent of the Jewish people, the Parthians were now making aggressions on the side of Armenia, which were in fact a blow to the honour and therewith to the influence of Rome. The imperial officers required the tributary chiefs on the frontier to arm on their behalf. Corbulo, the bravest of the Roman generals, was placed at the head of fresh forces; the disagreements which ensued between him and Quadratus ended in the dismissal of the prefect, and the union of the eastern provinces under the best man the empire could summon to their defence. The Jews watched the progress of military operations; and if dismayed at the defeat of the Parthians, they were reassured by the death of Corbulo which so speedily followed. But the work of this general of the ancient stamp, rapid as it was, remained firmly established. Corbulo had restored the discipline of the legions, long demoralized by the negligence of their chiefs, and the luxury of their Syrian cantonments. He had formed an army of veteran legions: he left the Third, the Fifth, the Tenth, and the Twelfth in full pride and vigour, to curb the discontent or turbulence which brooded over hopes of insurrection. And so thoroughly had he quelled the spirit of the Parthians, that, when three years after his death, the West was involved in universal confusion,—when the chiefs of the legions were hastening from all quarters to wrestle for the empire in Italy, when Gaul on one side, as we have seen, and Judea, as we are about to see, on the other, were at once in open revolt,—the hereditary foes of Rome still kept their swords in the scabbard, and neither gave aid to the insurgents, nor sought aggrandizement for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The ascendancy of Rome in the East acknowledged by the Parthians.

Felix, the procurator of Judea, was succeeded in 815 by Porcius Festus, who was carried off by sickness after a vig-

<sup>1</sup> This submission of the Parthians may be partly ascribed to a personal admiration conceived, as it would seem, by Vologesus for Nero, of which evidence has been given already. See above, chap. iv.

orous government of two years. Festus was followed by Albinus, and after another interval of two years, marked by no occurrence of moment, Gessius Florus undertook the control of the Jewish people, who were becoming daily more refractory. For their coercion the Romans had invented a peculiar machinery. To Agrippa, the tetrarch, for by this style we may best distinguish him, they had given the title of king of the sacrifices, in virtue of which he was suffered to reside in the palace at Jerusalem, and retain certain functions, fitted to impose on the imagination of the more ardent votaries of Jewish nationality. The palace of the Herods overlooked the Temple, and from its upper rooms the king could observe all that passed in that mart of business and intrigue. Placed, however, as a spy in this watch-tower, he was regarded by the Zealots, the faction of independence, as a foe to be baffled rather than a chief to be respected and honoured. They raised the walls of their sanctuary to shut out his view, and this, among other causes of discontent between the factions in the city, ripened to an enmity which presaged the expulsion of the king with all the friends of Rome about him, at the first outbreak of the now inevitable insurrection.<sup>1</sup>

The Romans employ Agrippa as a spy upon the Jews in Jerusalem.

And now was introduced into the divisions of this unhappy people a new feature of atrocity. The Zealots sought to terrify the more prudent or time-serving by an organized system of private assassination. Their *Sicarii*, or men of the dagger, are recognised in the records of the times as a secret agency, by which the most impatient of the patriots calculated on exterminating the chief supporters of the foreign government. The conspirators met under oath in secret, and chose the victims who should in turn be sacrificed. Their sentence was executed in the streets, or even on the steps of the Temple, on occasions of public festival, and no precautions availed to protect the objects of their enmity.<sup>2</sup> Hitherto the Romans,

The Sicarii or secret assassins.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Antiq. Jud.* xx. 7. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. *Antiq. Jud.* xx. 7. 5. The historian, however, ascribes the most

from policy rather than respect, had omitted to occupy Jerusalem with a military force. They were now invited and implored by the chiefs of the priesthood and nobility, and Florus sent a detachment to seize the city and protect the lives of his adherents. This was the point to which the Zealots themselves had wished to lead him. On entering the walls the Romans found the roofs thronged with an excited and mutinous population; they were assailed first with stones, then with more deadly weapons: and when they had succeeded in forcing their way to the strong places of the city, and taken possession of them, they were unable to communicate among themselves, or with the stations behind them. The procurator at Cæsarea shrank from sending a larger force, to become entangled in similar difficulties. In the popular councils the Zealots were now triumphant. Agrippa in vain harangued the multitude in favour of his patrons. He found it prudent to withdraw in haste to his own territories. The Idumean dynasty ceased to reign even in the hearts of the patriots. They looked back to the glorious era of the Maccabees. The Lower City and the Temple were abandoned to the people, while the Romans held the citadel, with the palace, and other heights and towers of the Upper City on Mount Zion, where the Roman banners waved over the chiefs of the Herodian or Romanizing faction. For seven days the possession of these respective strongholds was more or less warmly contested; but the conflict resulted in the conflagration of the royal residence and other buildings on Zion, the capture of the citadel, the slaughter of the high-priest Ananias, and finally the capitulation of the Romans. But the Zealots were resolved to render accommodation impossible, and involve the nation in inexpiable guilt. The capitulation was ruthlessly violated and every armed invader passed on the edge of the sword.<sup>1</sup>

Insurrection at Jerusalem. Capitulation and massacre of a Roman force.

daring of these assassinations, that of the priest Jonathan, to the instigation of the governor Felix.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* ii. 17. 10.



Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, had been preparing to succour his advanced detachment with the forces of the province. He put himself at the head of the Twelfth legion, with six thousand men picked from other corps, and several thousands of auxiliaries. Agrippa was required to attend the expedition. The Jews rushed forth from Jerusalem and the neighbouring cities, to meet this array. Enthusiasm supplied the place of discipline and training, and, to the surprise of all but those who believed in the divinity of their mission, they broke the ranks of the advancing Romans, and repulsed them with the loss of five hundred men. Gallus was saved from total rout only by his numerous cavalry, in which arm the Jews, unprepared and ill-appointed, were wholly deficient. For three days the proconsul kept within his entrenched camp, which the insurgents had not the means of attacking; then, resuming courage, he advanced again towards Jerusalem. At the instance of Agrippa he even proffered terms of accommodation. But the Jews, headed by the resolute Simon, son of Giora, not only refused to entertain them, but received the bearers with a shower of arrows. Thereupon Gallus led his troops to the gates, and renewed his assaults on various points for five days. Every attack was steadily repelled, and day by day the defenders cast headlong from the walls the most noted partisans of Rome, whom they caught still lurking in the stronghold of national independence. The position of Jerusalem, held by desperate men, defied an irregular assault. Meanwhile the population was rising on the rear and flanks of the assailants. Gallus was compelled to retire once more to the confines of his province, with the loss of five thousand men, many officers, and the eagle of his legion. In dismay he announced to the proconsul that all Judea was in rebellion. Florus hastened to fix on his subordinate the blame of this serious disaster. Though we are not informed what measures were taken against him, it would seem from an expression of Tacitus that his death, which occurred only a few

Disastrous expedition of Cestius Gallus.

A. D. 66.  
A. U. 819.

months later, was ascribed by many to chagrin or apprehension.<sup>1</sup>

The defeat of Gallus had occurred in the first days of October, 66; and the account of it reached Nero in Greece.<sup>2</sup>

Vespasian appointed to conduct operations against the Jews.

A. D. 67.  
A. U. 820.

The importance of the crisis was at once understood. Nero had no abler captain than Vespasian, and this man was chosen accordingly to command the Roman forces in the disturbed region.<sup>3</sup> The commotions so often recurring in Judea had evidently come to a head, and required complete and final suppression. Vespasian was directed to proceed by land into Syria, collecting troops and war-engines on his route, while Titus took ship for Alexandria, and summoned from thence the Fifteenth legion, to serve in the impending campaign. By the spring of the next year a force of three legions, with a full complement of allies and auxiliaries, was mustered at Ptolemais, a convenient spot for the protection of the districts which still adhered to the Romans, and at the same time for conducting operations against Galilee on one side, and Judea on the other.<sup>4</sup>

The six months' interval which had elapsed had not been unemployed by the Jews. The party which favoured the

The chiefs of the Jewish parties.

A. D. 67.  
A. U. 820.

Roman domination had already been crushed in its head-quarters at Jerusalem; its scattered members had taken refuge in the Roman camps. But the nation was still divided into two factions, that of the Zealots, the assertors of national independence, resolved to regain their freedom or perish, and the Herodians, who, still hoping to retain their place among the nations, were willing to accept a compromise, and acknowledge, as the price of existence, the supremacy of a foreign

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* ii. 19.; Suet. *Vespas.* 4.: Tac. *Hist.* v. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Clinton, *Fast. Rom.* i. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iii. 1. 2.: *μόνον εὑρίσκει Οὔεσπασιανὸν ταῖς χρεῖαις ἀναλογοῦντα.*

<sup>4</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iii. 2. 4. The legionary force amounted to 18,000, the auxiliaries to 20,000, the allied contingents to 20,000 more (*Bell. Jud.* iii. 4. 2.).

government. Of the one party the most prominent chiefs were Simon Bargiora, Eleazar, and John of Giscala, all of whom became notorious in the events which followed: while of the other, more respectable for rank and station, the leader was the high-priest Ananus or Annas. The merits of Ananus, if we may believe Josephus, were equal to his position, and, had he lived, his views, it was conceived, might have retained the ascendancy, and preserved Jerusalem together with the nationality, if not the independence of the Jews. At this moment, indeed, whatever jealousies might exist between them, both parties still acted ostensibly in concert; but the second was the more powerful of the two, and, in the measures of defence they adopted in common, it was to the captains of the Herodian faction that the most considerable commands were intrusted.

The Sanhedrim had been converted into a council of war, and had divided Palestine into seven military districts, besides that of the capital itself. Of these, the most important, from wealth and population as well as from its advanced position on the frontier of Syria, embraced the Upper and Lower Galilee, and was occupied by a strong line of posts from the sea to the Lake of Tiberias. But the rich plain of Esdraelon, which lay between this mountain zone and Samaria, was overshadowed by the Roman fortress of Ptolemais; and the tetrarchy of Agrippa, which reached to the border of the lake, menaced Galilee on its eastern flank. Strong as it was by nature, and abounding in strong as well as populous cities, Galilee was critically placed between the outposts of the enemy, and the chief to whom it was entrusted was expected to maintain it from its own resources, with little hope of support from the centre of the Jewish power. Cestius Gallus had aimed a rash blow at Jerusalem itself; but the new leader of the Romans, warned by his defeat, deemed it prudent to adopt other tactics, and it was Vespasian's plan to isolate Galilee from Samaria and Judea, and effect its complete reduction before he turned his arms against the hostile metropolis.

Vespasian's  
first operations  
directed against  
Galilee.



The command in Galilee was given by the Sanhedrim to Josephus, the son of Matthias, the celebrated historian, as he afterwards became, of the war, and compiler of the Antiquities of his nation. He belonged to an ancient and noble family, and was noted already for his learning and abilities as well as for his birth. He had visited Rome; and, besides being distinguished with the favour of Poppæa, had been disposed, by what he had witnessed of the splendour of the republic, to acquiesce in her conquering destiny.<sup>1</sup> He was not more than thirty years of age, a time of life, as he remarks, when, if a man has happily escaped sin, he can scarcely guard himself against slander.<sup>2</sup> The circumstance, indeed, of his voyage to Rome, and introduction to the imperial household, gave rise perhaps to jealousies and suspicions, and when on his return he avowed the moderation of his views, and his belief in Roman invincibility, he became no doubt an object of hostility and possibly of misrepresentation to patriots of a more ardent stamp. But the Herodians, as has been said, now prevailed in the Jewish councils, and Josephus was deputed to take command in Galilee, and conduct the defence of that region in the way he deemed most conducive to the general interest.

In the history he has given us of the Jewish War, Josephus dwells, as might be expected, with great minuteness, on his administration of this province, which bore the brunt of the first campaign against the Romans. But besides this general narrative of the war, we possess a second work by the same author, in which he relates the particulars of his own life and personal adventures; and this differs materially in political colour from the first. The *History* had been written soon after the events themselves, in which he bore so eminent a part, when he had fallen into the hands of the Romans, and had consented to purchase

Josephus, the historian, placed in command of Galilee.

Equivocal character of Josephus. Variation in his own account of his conduct in the "History," and in the "Life."

Joseph. *Vit.* 3.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. *Vit.* 15.

their favour by a tribute of unlimited admiration. In this work it was his object to excuse to his countrymen his own recent defection; to represent the fidelity with which he had served their true interests, as agent of the party who sought to preserve their nation, though with the sacrifice of its independence; to charge on the rashness of the Zealots the ruin which had actually befallen them, from which he had himself escaped by timely but justifiable submission. But in the *Life*, which was composed twenty years later, in reply to the insinuations of a personal enemy, that he had deserved ill both of Jews and Romans by the aimless obstinacy of his defence, he seeks no longer to keep up appearances with his countrymen, but devotes all his ingenuity to showing that he was throughout a covert friend of Rome, seeking, under the guise of prudent patriotism, to smooth the progress of the invaders, and deliver Palestine into their hands. If a cloud of suspicion hangs to this day over the head of the historian, he owes it to this shameless representation of his own conduct. The ardent upholders of a Jewish nationality, which has survived in some sense the fall of Jerusalem nearly eighteen centuries, still denounce him, from his own words, as a renegade to their cause.<sup>1</sup> His equivocation is patent, and admits of no defence; yet I believe that of the two representations he gives us of his policy, the former is the nearer to the truth;—that he was more faithful to his professions, in fact, than he wished, at a later period, to be supposed; that he has falsely accused himself, to preserve the favour of his masters, of crimes which should only have gained him their contempt. He seeks in vain to repudiate the glory which must ever attach, in his own despite, to his skill and prowess. Allowing for many exaggerations and misstatements in both, according to their respective bias, I still regard the *Wars*, rather than the *Life*, as the genuine record of the campaign in Galilee.

If the resources of the Jewish people were unequal to the task of resisting the concentrated energies of Rome, they

<sup>1</sup> See Salvador's History, ii. 15. 49.

Military re-  
sources of Ju-  
dea.

were far more formidable than could have been expected from the smallness of their country, and their slender experience in war. In extent Palestine scarcely equalled one of the least of modern European states, such as Belgium or Piedmont; nor was its soil naturally calculated to support a very dense population. It seems however that, partly from artificial cultivation, partly from foreign importations, it actually maintained more than proportionate numbers: Galilee alone, a district not larger than an English county, could boast of *numerous* cities, the least of which contained fifteen thousand inhabitants; and Josephus found himself there at the head of a hundred thousand armed men.<sup>1</sup> Exempted as the Jews had generally been from the levies imposed on the provinces, the flower of their youth had not been drained to recruit the cohorts on distant frontiers. But their kings had been required to maintain contingents within their own territories; and though the sceptre had departed from Judah, the country was still full of soldiers trained to service under the Herods and Agrippas. It had, moreover, been long infested by armed bands, who had coloured their brigandage with the name of patriotism, and might be not less formidable when arrayed under a truly national standard. The whole people recurred with instinctive alacrity to the traditions, still faithfully preserved, of its ancient military organization under Maccabæus, David, and Joshua. Arms were distributed to all who could bear them, and more, says Tacitus, claimed the honour of arming than in proportion to their numbers: the women were not less devoted than the men, and all agreed in the determination rather to die than be expelled, the only contemplated alternative, from their country.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iii. 3. It must be observed, however, that this statement regarding the surprising populousness of Galilee should be accepted with caution. The numbers of Josephus are liable throughout to suspicion of great exaggeration. In some cases this is susceptible of proof, as will appear; in others, if I sometimes adopt his figures without remark, it may be understood that I do not on that account put any real confidence in them.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 13.



Though the moderate party, of which Josephus was the instrument, was for the moment in the ascendant in the council at Jerusalem, he could not rely on its maintaining its power from day to day, nor could it secure its chiefs from being harassed by the Zealots with demands for more violent and uncompromising measures. If the governor of Galilee was satisfied with arming his militia, storing and fortifying his towns, and presenting to the Romans a dignified attitude of resistance, there were more vehement spirits at work around him, urging him to spoil and kill every doubtful partisan, and challenge the foe to a war of sanguinary reprisals. The Zealots of Galilee, who swarmed in every township, were stimulated by a countryman, John of Giscala, a man of great influence in Jerusalem, whom Josephus brands without reserve as a ruffian and a brigand. The historian has described to us how this opponent misrepresented all his actions, how he plotted against his life, corrupted the obedience of his people, and finally incited the council at Jerusalem to supersede him in his government.<sup>1</sup> In defeating these machinations Josephus seems to have employed great address, and we may the more readily believe his account from the vigour he unquestionable displayed in preparing for the defence of his province. It may be true that from the first he despaired of successful resistance to the Romans; his admiration of their policy, his awe at their military resources, were unworthy perhaps of the leader of a national insurrection, and helped to insure its defeat; nevertheless we must allow for the subjugation of men's minds, those especially of the most intelligent and thoughtful, by the long career of Roman invincibility. We must remember that the seeds of decay we can already trace in Roman discipline and conduct were not apparent to the generation with which we are now concerned: to them submission to Rome was prudence and philosophy, perhaps with some it was religion. The Zealots were so far

Josephus is harassed in his government by the intrigues of the Zealots.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iii. 21., *Vit.* 38. 40.

in the right that the last faint hope of successful resistance lay in the rash valour of obstinacy and blindness.

It was behind the walls of Jotapata that Josephus prepared to make his great stand for the defence of his province, which he declined to imperil by operations in the field. The exact position of this place is not known; but it is said to have been strong by nature as well as by art, and we may conjecture that it stood on one of the spurs of the hill-region of Galilee. While Vespasian was collecting his forces at Ptolemais, he had detached his lieutenant Placidus to make a demonstration against this fortress, but without result; and the general himself moved against it at a later period, with the main strength of his forces. The fidelity and courage of Josephus, who threw himself into the place, are sufficiently attested by his defence of forty-seven days, by the repulse of Placidus, the endurance of great extremities by famine, and the variety of resources with which he baffled the skill and perseverance of the enemy. Vespasian was forced to lead the assault in person, and suffered himself a wound. Josephus indeed admits, possibly to get favour with his conquerors, that for his own part he would have desisted earlier from a contest he knew to be hopeless; but when the obstinacy of his countrymen would listen to no compromise, he gallantly cast in his lot with theirs, and fought at their head till the place was finally stormed and captured. The account he gives of what followed savours strongly of deliberate imposture. He escaped, it seems, with thirty-nine of his comrades into one of the caves with which the region abounded; but his retreat was discovered to the Roman commander, who sent a friend to offer him his life. The fugitives, however, were exasperated and desperate; they would not suffer their chief to capitulate. Their cave was inaccessible to an armed force; but the Romans could have lit a fire at the entrance, and stifled them with the smoke. Vespasian, it is said, was anxious to get possession of Josephus alive, and forbade this to be done. The fanatics, however, resolved to kill themselves by

Josephus defends Jotapata, and is captured by the Romans.

mutual slaughter, and Josephus could only persuade them to abstain from indiscriminate massacre, and draw lots in successive pairs, to fall each on the sword of the other. This plan, which it seems had been recommended to him in a dream, was adopted with enthusiasm, and, strange to relate, Josephus himself and another were left last, when all the rest had perished. He persuaded this irresolute survivor to save both their lives by surrender, and the astute defender of Jotapata shelters his character for patriotism behind the manifest interposition of Providence.<sup>1</sup>

Nor, it seems, did the favour of Heaven stop here. Josephus was brought a prisoner to Vespasian, and it was announced to him that he should be sent as a pledge of victory to Nero. This he knew too well would be the certain prelude to his execution; but at this crisis he was inspired to predict to the Roman general the imperial fortunes which awaited him. Vespasian, whose ear was ever open to pretenders to supernatural knowledge, listened and believed. Josephus secured his favour, and was carried about for some years by his conqueror in a custody which he had no inclination perhaps to evade. Admitted finally among the clients of the emperor's house, he adopted the name of Titus Flavius, and attached himself to his patron's retinue at Rome.<sup>2</sup>

Josephus secures the favour of Vespasian.

By the capture of Jotapata and the governor of the province the resistance of Galilee was completely broken. Vespasian returned with his victorious army to Ptolemais before the end of June, and thence removed to Cæsarea on the Mediterranean, where the Greek population urged him, but without success, to

Reduction of Galilee and capture of Jotapata.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iii. 7. It seems to have been an object with Josephus to recommend himself to the credulous Vespasian as a man favoured with visions and prophetic inspiration. The story in the text was, I have no doubt, fabricated with this view.

<sup>2</sup> At the close of this war Josephus received grants of land in Judea from the conqueror, together with an annual pension and the Roman franchise. Joseph. *Vit.* 76. "A chacun selon ses œuvres," says Salvador, bitterly con-



sacrifice his distinguished prisoner. With two legions now stationed at this place, and two advanced to Scythopolis in the interior, he cut off the communications of Galilee with Judea, and was enabled to carry on at leisure the pacification of the northern districts. The only maritime place retained by the Jews was Joppa, where they had mustered a naval force for the annoyance of the Romans, whose supplies came, we must suppose, in a great measure from Egypt. The Romans sent a detachment to occupy the town, which made no resistance, the people taking to their ships. A storm dashed their armaments in pieces, and all that escaped the sea were massacred on shore. The town was destroyed, and a garrison established amidst its ruins, to prevent the recovery of its convenient roadstead.<sup>1</sup>

The tactics of Vespasian were slow and cautious. He was prepared to devote more than one campaign to making sure his ground before advancing to the assault of Jerusalem. In the course of this summer he conferred with Agrippa at Cæsarea-Philippi, to arrange perhaps the best mode of co-operation with the most powerful dependent of the empire, and the tetrarch, who well knew where his own interests lay, displayed his zeal in the Roman cause by a series of sumptuous entertainments. His sister Berenice, since the death of a first husband and her own desertion of a second, had continued to reside with him, and rumours prevailed about the character of their connexion more revolting to western ears than to eastern.<sup>2</sup> If we may believe the statement of Josephus, Berenice must have been thirty-nine years of age at this time, when she became perhaps first known to Titus, twelve years her junior: we

Capture of Tiberias and Tarichea.

trasting this gilded servitude with the fate of the real patriots of Jerusalem. Salvador, ii. 467.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Juvenal, vi. 158.: "Barbarus incestæ dedit hunc Agrippa sorori." After the death of Herod, king of Chalcis, A. D. 48, Berenice was united to Ptolemy, king of Cilicia. She was living with Agrippa A. D. 60, when St. Paul appeared before them at Cæsarea.

shall find that ten years later he was even then passionately enamoured of her. But the Roman general was still conducting his operations with unremitting activity. In August Tiberias surrendered, and Tarichea was stormed in September. The capture of this last place was followed by an appalling atrocity, for which we can discover no excuse, nor was any advanced for it. Josephus relates with little emotion that the whole population was collected in the Stadium, the infirm and old, twelve hundred in number, were at once put to death, six thousand of the younger were sent to work at the cutting of the Isthmus, the rest, to the number of thirty thousand, were sold publicly as slaves.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless the barbarity of the Romans, if it was really such as is here represented, was not unprovoked by similar excesses on the part of their opponents; and henceforth we shall find both sides rivalling each other in remorseless bloodshed, whenever opportunity offered.<sup>2</sup> In no work are the hideous features of ancient warfare so nakedly portrayed as in the pages of the Jewish historian. With the end of the year all northern Palestine had fallen into the hands of the conquerors, and John of Giscala, who had proved incapable of replacing the governor he had denounced as a traitor, had sought refuge in Jerusalem; *so God willed it*, says his opponent, *for the destruction of the city.*<sup>3</sup>

The campaign of 68 was conducted by Vespasian on the same principles as the preceding. He still refrained from any attempt on Jerusalem, and when urged to strike at the head of the Jewish confederation, already weakened by intestine divisions, he replied that it was best to leave nothing to chance, and to let the success of his operations be worked

Second campaign of Vespasian. Reduction of Peræa.

A. D. 68.  
A. U. 821.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iii. 9, 10. I have already given a caution with regard to the habitual exaggeration of Josephus. He was disposed to magnify the sufferings of the Jews, in excuse for his own temporizing counsels. It should be remembered that his history, composed in Greek, was not written for the Romans.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, in his bitter enmity towards the chiefs of the Zealots, had a strong motive to make the worst of their misdeeds.

Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iv. 1. 10., iv. 2, 3.

out by the hands of his opponents. Two officers, Placidus and Trajanus, the father of the future emperor of that name, ravaged the district beyond Jordan, and drove multitudes of its houseless people towards the treacherous defences of the capital. Urging before them all their flocks and herds, as in the great national migration of seventeen centuries before, the fugitives were arrested by the swollen waters of the river, and massacred with frightful slaughter.<sup>1</sup> But many thousands still escaped to swell the throng, which was destined to be cooped within the capital when at length the Roman armies approached it. Vespasian was at the same time drawing on from the opposite quarter; and his progress, as before, was marked with flames and devastation, and almost incredible bloodshed. His outposts were advanced to Jericho; but in the middle of the year he withdrew from active operations, fixing himself at Cæsarea, and listening for the first report of the impending revolutions in the West, while Titus was sent to confer with Mucianus at Antioch, and discuss matters of deeper interest to both father and son, than the means to be employed for reducing a provincial capital.

During all the following year warfare was suspended on the part of the Romans. Confiding perhaps in the omens and prophecies which assured him of the eventual succession, Vespasian seems to have watched the rise both of Galba and Otho, without faltering in his own anticipations, and to have reserved the strength of his legions for the crisis evidently approaching. By Mucianus in Syria, by Tiberius Alexander in Egypt, by Agrippa and Berenice in the centre of Palestine, his interests were diligently served, and in the year 69, as we have seen, he was saluted emperor by his troops, and irrevocably launched on the career of ambition. It was arranged that Mucianus should conduct the war against Vitellius in Europe, that Vespasian should seize in person the

Suspension of  
hostilities  
during the  
struggle for the  
succession.

A. D. 69.

A. U. 822.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iv. 8.



granaries of Egypt, that Agrippa should betake himself to Rome, and intrigue for him with the nobles in the capital; while to Titus was committed the charge of the contest in Palestine, which his father, still faithful to the traditions of the service, would not consent to abandon even with the empire in view.

The admiration our Jewish historian has expressed for the power and greatness of Rome stands remarkably in contrast with the scornful disparagement of the Jews in which his Roman rival indulges.<sup>1</sup> Of the narrative of the war, as it was written by Tacitus, we possess a fragment only. The *Histories*, the first of his longer works, commence with the consulship of Galba in 69, and the author, preserving strictly the annalistic form he had prescribed himself, reviews in a few lines only the circumstances of the war in question, as conducted up to that date by Gallus and Vespasian.<sup>2</sup> The year 69, he says, was devoted to the civil contest, and no hostile movement was attempted by Titus until peace was restored at home, and the empire had finally passed into the hands of his father. It is from this point that his own narrative commences, and this is again broken off, after a few introductory chapters, by the accident which has deprived us of the remainder of the work.<sup>3</sup> We may conjecture, indeed, that in the later composition to which he gave the name of *Annals*, in which he traced the earlier history from Tiberius to Nero, the story of the first campaigns was supplied, and occupied

Sources of  
Jewish history  
misappreciated  
by Tacitus.

<sup>1</sup> Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* iii. 5.) gives an interesting account of the Roman armies, adding: ταῦτα μὲν οὖν διεξῆλθον οὐ Ῥωμαίους ἐπαινέσαι προαιρούμενος τοσοῦτον, ὅσον εἰς τε παραμυθίαν τῶν κεχειρωμένων, καὶ εἰς ἀποτροπὴν τῶν νεωπεριζόντων.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 10.: "Duravit tamen patientia Judæis usque ad Gessium Flo- rum procuratorem. Sub eo bellum ortum, et comprimere cœptantem Cestium Gallum, Syriæ legatum, varia prœlia, ac sæpius adversa, exceperere. Quid ubi fato aut tædio occidit, missu Neronis Vespasianus fortuna famaue et egregiis ministris (e. g. the father of Trajan), intra duas ætates cuncta camporum, omnesque præter Hierosolyma urbes, victore exercitu tenebat."

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 1-13.

under its proper years the important place it merited. But this portion of the Annals also is lost, and the Roman account of the most terrible conflict of the empire appears as a mutilated trunk, boldly designed and colossal in proportions, but shorn of the head and limbs, the beginning and the conclusion. Thus disappointed we look with the more interest to a sketch preserved us of the antiquities of the Jewish nation, from which we derive at least an insight into the spirit in which Tacitus approached his subject, and the estimate he may be supposed to have formed of that people's character. With the works of Philo and Josephus, not to mention the sacred records of the Jews, within his reach, it must strike us with surprise that so grave a writer should be content to refer, for the instruction of his countrymen, to the loose conjectures of Greek mythologers and fabulists. While there were thousands of native Jews and proselytes at Rome, instructed in the narrative of Moses, he preferred, it seems, to draw his information from the hostile Egyptians frequenting the camps of Titus and Vespasian, and swallowed without reflection the figments of Manetho and the pretended sages of Alexandria.<sup>1</sup> The story of the Jewish people, thus communicated to Tacitus, is exposed to the scorn of their conquerors in such language as the following :

*Before relating the final destruction of this famous city, it will be well to explain its origin. The Judæi, it is reported, flying from the island of Crete, alighted on the farthest corner of Libya, at the period when Saturn was driven from his realm by Jupiter. This fact is established from their name: Ida is a famous mountain in Crete, and its people, the Idæi, became denominated with a barbaric extension of the*

Tacitus's  
strange mis-  
representation  
of the origin of  
the Jews and  
the character of  
their religion.

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Joseph. c. Apion. i. 25.: τῶν δὲ εἰς ἡμᾶς βλασφημιῶν ἡρξάντο μὲν Αἰγύπτιοι • βουλόμενοι δὲ ἐκείνοις τινὲς χαρίζεσθαι, παρατρέπειν ἐπεχείρησαν τὴν ἀληθείαν, οὔτε τὴν εἰς Αἴγυπτον ἄφιξιν, ὥς ἐγένετο, τῶν ἡμετέρων προγόνων ὁμολογοῦντες, οὔτε τὴν ἐξοδου ἀληθεύοντες, κ. τ. λ. He particularly instances Manetho and Chæremon as circulating falsehoods about the origin of the Jews, and these appear to have been the sources to which Tacitus chiefly referred.

sound, *Judæi*. Some relate that in the reign of *Isis* a multitude of people, overflowing the limits of *Egypt*, cast themselves on the neighbouring countries under chiefs named *Hierosolymus* and *Judas*. Others again assert that the Jews were a swarm of *Ethiopians*, driven by internal animosities to flee their country in the days of *Cepheus*. Again it is related that certain wanderers from *Assyria*, in quest of lands, occupied a part of *Egypt*, and quickly possessed themselves of *Hebrew* towns and territories, and the regions bordering upon *Syria*. Finally, another tradition assigns them a nobler origin, declaring that their city *Hierosolyma* was built and named by the *Solymi*, the (*Lycian*) people celebrated by *Homer*.<sup>1</sup>

The idea present to the writer's mind in regard to all these derivations, except the last, was that the Jews were properly no nation at all, but only the scum and offscouring of a nation, and as such were entitled to none of the observance due, by the comity of nations, to the acknowledged lords of earth. It was only by establishing their descent from an Homeric people, as *Tacitus*, perhaps reluctantly, suggests, that they could pretend to claim in their favour the protection of international law, as understood by antiquity.

*Most writers agree*, he continues, *that a loathsome skin disorder once prevailing in Egypt, king Bocchoris was commanded by the oracle of Hammon to purge his realm of this brood of people, and dismiss them to other lands, as hateful to the gods. Thus brought together and abandoned in the desert, when the rest were overwhelmed with their distress, Moses, one of the exiles, exhorted them to expect no help from gods or men, but to trust in him as a divine leader. . . . They consented, and commenced their journey at random, with no idea whither they were going, or with what object. Nothing so distressed them as the want of water. And now they were reduced to the last extremity, and flung themselves in despair*

<sup>1</sup> *Tac. Hist.* v. 3.



upon the ground, when a herd of wild asses was seen making its way from feeding to a hill covered with wood. Moses followed, expecting them to lead to some grassy spot, and discovered abundant springs under their guidance. Thus refreshed, the fugitives completed a journey of six days, and on the seventh took possession of lands, driving out their owners, where they founded their city, and consecrated their temple. To make himself a nation for the time to come, Moses appointed them new rites, opposed to those of all mankind besides. Among them every thing elsewhere sacred is held profane; to them all things are lawful which among us are forbidden. They have consecrated in their temple a figure of the brute by the guidance of which they slaked their thirst and found their way in the desert; and they sacrifice rams there, on purpose, it should seem, to cast insult upon Hammon.<sup>1</sup> They slay the ox also, which the Egyptians

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 4.: "Effigiem animalis, quo monstrante errorem sitimque depulerant, penetrali sacravere." The writer cannot mean to imply that the image of an ass was worshipped in the Jewish temple, for he says, immediately afterwards, that the fane was vacant. He had heard, perhaps, that such a figure was kept there as a votive offering. However the notion arose, the worship of an ass, or more properly of an ass's head, was long objected to the Jews by their opponents (see Joseph. *c. Apion.* ii. 6, 7.), and afterwards to the Christians. Tertull. *Apol.* 16.: Minuc. Felix, *Octav.* 28.

Recent excavations on the Aventine have discovered the representation, scratched on the wall, of a human figure with an ass's head, crucified, a man in the act of worshipping it, with the inscription: 'Αλεξάμενος, σίβεται θεόν. See the *Dublin Review* for March, 1857. This, it is conjectured, is a caricature of Christian worship, in accordance with the well-known statement in Tertullian. The head, however, is allowed to be more like that of a horse than of an ass. I may remind the reader of the passage in Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* viii. 64.), in which he says that Cæsar had a horse with human forefeet, as represented in the statue before the temple of Venus. The story is copied by Suetonius (*Jul.* 61.) and Dion (lvii. 54.). The existence of such a statue, which every citizen must have seen daily, cannot be questioned, however absurd the popular notion about it which these writers so gravely embraced. But some lines in Statius (*Sylv.* i. 1. 84.) seem to throw light on the subject. Comparing the equestrian statue of Domitian with that of Cæsar, he says:

"Cedat equus Latiae qui contra templa Diones  
Cæsarei stat sede fori, quem traderis ausus

worship as their god *Apis*. They abstain from swine's flesh, in memory of the plague of scabs from which they had suffered, to which that animal is subject. By numerous fasts they attest the long famine they endured, and their unleavened bread bears witness to the hurry in which they snatched their corn for their journey. The seventh day, they say, was appointed for rest, because they then ceased from their miseries, and from thence they have gone on to indulge themselves with a cessation from labour every seventh year also. Others affirm that this is done in honour of *Saturn*: whether because they got the rudiments of their cult from the *Idæans*, or because, of the seven planets that sway the destinies of man, that of *Saturn* is loftiest and most potent. . . .

From the base origin of these gipsy wanderers it would follow, in the mind of Tacitus, that their destinies were vulgar and terrene. No God was their patron, no wonders were wrought for them; their rites were of no divine intuition, their usages were uninspired by a breath of superior intelligence. Their ceremonies, divested of the charm of immemorial mystery, were plain prosaic references to the most obvious phenomena of nature. In this, as in all other re-

Pellæo, Lysippe, duci; mox Cæsaris ora  
Aurata cervice tulit."

I venture to suggest that this work of Lysippus was the man-horse in question, and was symbolical of Alexander's power or divinity. Cæsar carried it off from Syria, and replaced the head of the rider with his own. Mionnet, *Médailles Antiques*, Supplement, tom. v. art. 861., thus describes a coin of Nicæa:

"M. ANT. ΓΟΡΔΙΑΝΟC. ΑΥ. Tête radiée, avec un bouclier et un javelot sur l'épaule droite.

"Revers: ΙΠΠΙΟΝ. ΒΡΟΤΟΠΙΟΔΑ. ΝΙΚΑΙΕΩΝ. Héros à cheval, la tête couverte du bonnet Phrygien, et tenant de la main droite une couronne. Le cheval, dont les pieds de devant sont humains, tient dans le droit levé un bâton ou sceptre, autour du quel est un serpent, et sa queue repliée se termine par une tête de serpent [comp. *Apocol.* ix. 19.: αἱ γὰρ οὐραὶ αὐτῶν ὁμοίαι ὑφέσιν ἔχουσαι κεφαλὰς]; une petite Victoire vole au devant du héros pour le couronner."

In Creuzer's *Religions de l'Antiquité* (Guignaut) I find (i. i. p. 190.) that Vishnu is expected to appear in his tenth avatar on horseback, or, as some say, with a horse's face and a human figure, for the final punishment of sin.

spects, the Jews, he would have maintained, were entitled to no indulgence from their conquerors, no sympathy from the intelligent and humane.

*These fashions, he proceeds to say, however they were introduced, are sanctioned by their antiquity: their other peculiarities are less innocent, and have prevailed through the evil disposition of the people themselves. The Jews have grown into a nation by the agglomeration of the worst of men from all quarters; and dogged as is their fidelity, prompt as is their sympathy towards one another, while towards all besides they exercise the hatred of avowed enemies,—refusing to eat or intermarry with them, however licentious in their connexions among themselves,—they have appointed circumcision for their distinctive bond of union. This token they exact of all who adopt their religion, and these they teach, as their first lesson, to despise their own divinities, and renounce their country, their kindred, and their friends. They are careful, however, to multiply their numbers, and count it a crime to put their kin to death: they believe, moreover, that the souls of those who die in battle or on the scaffold are immortal. Hence their lust of begetting and their scorn of dying. Like the Egyptians, they bury, and do not burn their bodies, and take the same interest as the Egyptians in preserving them: for both hold a like belief about the dead, though their ideas of divine things are directly opposed. For the Egyptians adore various animals, and their visible images; the Jews conceive of God mentally, and as one only. Profane, they say, are those who fashion a figure of the Deity with perishable materials, after a human likeness: the Deity is supreme and eternal, nor can It change, nor Is it liable to perish. Accordingly they suffer no images in their cities, nor even in their temples. They concede no such flattery to kings, no such compliments to Cæsars. But because their priests played on pipes and timbrels, and wore ivy garlands, and a golden vine was found in their temple, some have thought that Father Bacchus, the conqueror of the East, was worshipped by them, though their usage bore little*



*resemblance to his: inasmuch as Bacchus instituted brilliant and joyous rites, but the ceremonial of the Jews is pitiful and sordid.*<sup>1</sup>

These studied insults towards a vanquished enemy, this ungenerous perversion of facts to blast his character, and repel his claims to justice and compassion, must not be passed over without notice. The author's determination to paint the rites of Judaism in the worst colours, so different from the light in which his countrymen had been wont to regard them, is not more odious than his insensibility to the sublimity of its dogmas, and the purity of its moral teaching.<sup>2</sup> Whether he echoed the ravings of popular hostility, or enrolled himself among the flatterers of the Roman court, we must equally deny him a love of truth and concern for justice. We shall the less regret the chance which has deprived us of his narrative of the Jewish war, in which the absence of candour and just appreciation of the enemy was no doubt ill redeemed by painting, however brilliant, Tacitus, it may be feared, was incapable of understanding the burning zeal and solemn enthusiasm which marked the most soul-stirring struggle of all ancient history.

Whatever was the moral corruption of the Jewish people at this epoch, however deep the degeneracy of feeling which blinded them to the spiritual character of the promises already fulfilled among them, their faith in the national creed was not perhaps then less intense than in the days of their purity and simplicity. Sufferings had cherished and not extinguished it; for these sufferings had always been accompanied with hope, and the whole genius of Judaism was fitted to keep alive the expectation of deliverance. The repetition, day by day, of

There is the less cause to regret the loss of Tacitus's account of the war.

Vigour of the religious sentiment among the Jews at this epoch.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 5.: "Judæorum mos absurdus sordidusque."

<sup>2</sup> It may be remembered that Strabo's account of the origin and teaching of the Jews (xvi. 2. p. 761, 762.) is far more dignified and candid than that of Tacitus. This later change of sentiment towards them, which may be remarked also in the tone of popular literature at Rome, is well worthy of notice.

the Psalms and Prophecies charmed away the advances of despair and despondency. Nor can we doubt that the concentration of their faith on One God gave peculiar vigour to the religious sentiment among them. Monotheism is more enthusiastic than Polytheism: it assures men of a closer connexion with the Deity: it may rush into the excesses of fatalism or fanaticism, but it stands a strain of temporal discouragement which would break asunder all the bands of idolatry and superstition. No polytheist could comprehend the principles which animated the Jew at this eventful epoch; least of all a polytheist of the Roman aristocracy; one who had renounced all vital faith himself, and trusted in no higher intelligence than his own. The strength of this people's convictions is shown by their stedfast rejection of the pretensions of magic, which their religion strenuously denounced. Tacitus himself remarks the absence among them, most strange as it must have seemed to him, of those expiatory rites by which the heathen avowed his terrors in the face of prodigies and omens. In this sturdy abnegation of the resources of feebler minds he might have discovered the genuine fervour of the faith which animated the people he so ungenerously calumniated.<sup>1</sup>

There is another point of view, however, which the heathen philosopher could not seize, from which the Christian must regard the position of the Jews. Whether we consider their sin to have lain in their carnal interpretation of prophecy, or in their rejection of truth and godliness in the person of Jesus Christ, they were judicially abandoned to their own passions, and the punishment which naturally awaited

The Jews in the view of Christians, judicially abandoned to their selfish passions.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 13.: "Evenerant prodigia, quæ neque hostiis neque votis piare fas habet gens superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus adversa." Exception must be made for private adventurers, such as the exorcists in *Acts*, xix. 13. (comp. Justin Martyr, *c. Tryph.* p. 311.; ἐπορκισταὶ τῇ τέχνῃ), who seem to have been generally Jews resident abroad. A strange passage in Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* xxx. 2.) speaks of the magic of the Jews at Cyprus, connecting it, by a mere conjecture apparently, with Moses: "Est et alia magices factio, a Mose

them. Though contending for a noble principle, as apostles of national liberty, the Zealots were not cordially supported by the mass of their own people: a large majority of the Jews would doubtless have acquiesced, however reluctantly, in the Roman dominion; still more would have been content to temporize; but the minority were the fiercest and the strongest in will; they could not persuade but they would not yield, and they enforced their determination upon the multitude by threats and violence. The Zealots have not inaptly been compared with the Montagnards of the French revolution, driven by their own indomitable passions to assert the truths which possessed them, with a ferocity which no possession can justify.

The reduction of Galilee and Peræa had driven numbers of the rural population within the walls of Jerusalem, the only stronghold which now seemed capable of protecting them. Among the rest, John of Giscal, as we have seen, had abandoned the defence

Revolutionary  
proceedings of  
the Zealots in  
Jerusalem.

of his native city, escaping from it before it had yet fallen, and had thrown himself with the most violent of his partisans into the capital. To the charge of cowardice with which the opposite faction, ill-pleased at his reappearance, assailed him, he replied that it was necessary to concentrate the forces of the nation, and compel the enemy to come to the attack of the impregnable fortress they had so long shrunk from. But this influx of strangers, scared from their judgment, and nothing more to lose, was fatal to the supremacy of the Moderate party in the city, who already maintained their position with difficulty. The views of the Zealots were not directed against the Romans only: they aimed at a complete revolution in the government at home, and as long as the invader was still distant, postponed every other care to an intrigue for exterminating their rivals, and grasping the helm of state. Under the guidance of the daring demagogue, Eleazar, they introduced bands of ruffians into

etiamnum et Lotapea Judæis pendens, sed multis millibus annorum post Zoroastrem. Tanto recentior est *Cypria*."



the city, who filled the streets with tumult and disorder, and seized the person of Antipas, a kinsman of Agrippa, and with him a number of the chief nobility. Apprehending that they should not be able to retain these victims in custody, the chiefs of the faction resolved to destroy them without form of trial, and pretending that they were in communication with the Romans, introduced a band of cutthroats into the prison, and put most of them to the sword.<sup>1</sup> The populace, still generally attached to their natural leaders, were cowed by the audacity of the act, and looked on with passive amazement. The Zealots proceeded to declare the vacancy of some priesthoods appropriated to noble families, and conferred them on obscure creatures of their own.

Thus insulted and menaced, Ananus, and such of his associates as had escaped assassination, appealed at last to the people, and organized the friends of order, including, no doubt, some secret adherents of Rome, against the terrorists, as a common enemy. The Zealots, menaced in their turn, but more prompt and audacious, seized the strong enclosure of the Temple, and established themselves within it. From thence they made various sallies against their opponents; their fanatical ardour overmatched the better discipline of the state militia; but they were far inferior in numbers, and were still confined, for the most part, to their defences, while Ananus, though he pushed his troops within their outer lines, shrank from turning his arms against the holy place in which they sheltered themselves. The Zealots were utterly unscrupulous. They had employed assassination; they now contemplated massacre. They treated with the turbulent banditti, who, expelled from their homes in the southern districts of Judea, were now roaming the country, and these, twenty thousand in number, rushed to the gates of the city, which they found closed against them. On the occurrence, however, of a tremendous tempest, which threw the government off its guard, the rev-

They massacre the Moderate party, and assume the government.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iv. 3. 5.

olutionists contrived to introduce them within the walls, and joining with them, attacked their opponents unawares with murderous effect. Ananus was among the first victims, and with him fell most of the leaders of his party. Eleazar and his confederates issued in triumph from their fastness, seized the reins of government, and completed the carnage of the day with a series of judicial executions.<sup>1</sup> The extreme party now reigned unresisted in Jerusalem. Jehovah, they proclaimed, had manifestly declared Himself on their side. Judea stood once more erect and independent, and invited her children dispersed throughout the world to fulfil, by a common effort, her imperial destiny. But in Rome they had been crushed; in Alexandria they were baffled; Nero had cajoled Vologesus, and engaged him to control their movements in Ctesiphon and Seleucia; the summons of the patriots met, it seems, with no response beyond the confines of Palestine, and the army of Titus confronted in closed lists the defenders of the city of David.

There was still a short interval ere the eagles were advanced in sight, and the *abomination of desolation* stood in the Holy Place.<sup>2</sup> While the chiefs of the Roman army were occupied with manœuvres for securing the empire, the leaders of the Jews were actively engaged in plotting against each other. The Zealots, in the moment of victory, were split into three factions. Eleazar, at the head of the residents of Jerusalem, still held his strong position in the inner enclosure of the Temple; but John of Giscala, who had refused to join in the recent massacres, and had received the adhesion of a portion of the population, now shocked and remorseful at the deeds they had committed, succeeded to the lodgment of Ananus in its outer precincts. Simon Bargiora, who had held the fortress

The Zealots, in three factions, occupy the city.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* iv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxiv. 15.: *βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως*. See Grotius in loc.: "Non dubito *βδέλυγμα* vocari signa Romanorum militaria." The *τόπος ἅγιος*, or "holy place," according to the same interpreter, includes the tract of country between the city and the hills which stand round about it

of Massada on the Asphaltic lake during the late campaigns, now entered the city with a third army, and posted himself on the opposite hill of Zion, from whence he conducted the defence of the common ramparts. John and Simon might dispute the superiority in numbers and equipment; but the stronghold of Eleazar was regarded by the Romans as the real citadel of Jerusalem. After many open attacks and secret stratagems, John contrived to assassinate this powerful rival, and obtained possession of the whole Temple with the eminence on which it stood. Henceforth the contest was narrowed to two competitors, who consented to waive hostilities only on the approach of the foreign armies to their walls.<sup>1</sup>

From the edge of the high country which intervenes between the Mediterranean and the Jordan valley, swells out a broad projection, inclining generally to the southward, and terminated abruptly by deep converging ravines.<sup>2</sup> Before plunging into these hollows, it rises in more than one distinct knoll, and, contrary to the usual configuration of such spurs of hills, the highest of these is nearest to its extremity. This conspicuous eminence the Jews, at least after their return from the Captivity, distinguished with the sacred name of Zion.<sup>3</sup> Here they pointed

Topography of  
Jerusalem.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 12.: "Tres duces, totidem exercitus. Extrema et latissima mœnia Simo . . . . mediam urbem Joannes, templum Eleazarus firmaverat. Multitudine et armis Joannes ac Simo, Eleazarus loco pollebat." Josephus explains their positions more definitely. *Bell. Jud.* v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The highest elevation of this tongue of land is said to be 2200 feet above the sea. Mr. Stanley has expressed clearly what preceding describers had failed to signalize, that the plateau of Jerusalem is generally above the level of the surrounding country. *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> Such is the name given to this hill in modern times, in conformity with the description in the Book of Maccabees, and apparently with the common usage of the Jews after the Captivity. It is remarkable that the name is never mentioned by Josephus or the writers of the New Testament, who were aware, perhaps, that its application was erroneous, and that the original Zion, on which stood the city of David, was the opposite height of the Temple. This transposition of the name (see Fergusson's *Essay*, and Thrupp's *Ancient Jerusalem*) seems to furnish an important key to the topography of that city. I have no



out the reputed tomb of their favourite sovereign David; here was the royal palace of Herod described with such enthusiasm by the Jewish historian, around which clustered perhaps the mansions of the nobles; the buildings on this summit were designated as the Upper City, encircled with a wall which crowned the brow of the hill. Eastward of Zion, and separated from it by a hollow, now scarcely distinguishable, called the Tyropœon, or cheesemarket, rose another eminence, sloping gradually from the north till it dipped into the valley of Jehoshaphat, with an escarpment of two hundred feet.<sup>1</sup> The Temple of Jerusalem, planted nearly on the southern extremity of this second hill, was completely overlooked by Zion, and also by the fortress Antonia, with which Herod protected it on its northern flank. Beyond this fortress the ground still rose to the northward, though lowered to some extent artificially, and received the name of Acra to indicate its marked elevation, though the buildings upon it were denominated the Lower City, in contradistinction from the Upper City of Zion.<sup>2</sup> Acra, or Moriah, as it has been called by a vulgar error, might thus represent the Capitoline, and Zion the Palatine at Rome: the depression between them, crossed by a bridge or causeway, was thronged with the dwellings of the lowest classes, and occupied the place of the Velabrum or the Suburra. A second

special qualifications myself for determining the merit of this view, on which a more competent witness, Mr. Stanley, gives no decided opinion. (*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 172.) The reader will, however, expect some aid in following my description, and I have furnished him with the best plan I can exhibit of ancient Jerusalem, being a slight modification of Kiepert's.

<sup>1</sup> Josephus declares, in his usual spirit of exaggeration, that the depth of the valley beneath the eastern front of the Temple was 400 cubits or 600 feet. *Antiq. Jud.* xx. 8. 7.

<sup>2</sup> The hill of Acra is described by Josephus as ἀμφίκυρτος, "gibbous," or "pointed at the extremities with convex sides,"—a word which is applied elsewhere to the moon in her third quarter; it represents very fairly the configuration of the hill, popularly called Moriah, on which the Temple stood. Thrupp, p. 36. Moriah, according to this author, means no special hill, but a certain hill-country. See p. 46.

rampart, issuing from the northern face of the wall of Zion, and after running northwards some hundreds of yards, sweeping round to the eastward and returning along the ridge above Jehoshaphat, connected the two hills together with a continuous line of defences. The hill of Zion was almost a perfect square: but Acra, more oblong in shape, overlapped it considerably to the northeast, and in the rectangle between them, a third hill, to which we may give the name of Calvary, rose a little lower than the one, and as much higher than the other. The venerable tradition which assigns this spot for the place of our Lord's crucifixion, and has consecrated it with the existing church of the Holy Sepulchre, may be accepted with reasonable confidence. At the date of the Crucifixion it stood outside the walls; but Herod Agrippa undertook to enclose it, together with a large suburb to the north, in a third line of defences. Bezetha, or the New City, for so it was denominated, embraced an area towards the north and north-east, fully equal to all the rest of Jerusalem together. The metropolis of Judaism was thus completed, after the type of Antioch or Alexandria, in three several quarters, separated from each other by distinct walls, but surrounded by an exterior fortification. On three sides it was defended by deep ravines, and its ramparts were piled up from the bottom, or elevated on the brow of nearly perpendicular precipices; but its northern face was level with the country beyond, and on this, the only accessible quarter, the attack of the Assyrians, in ancient times, and of the Romans under Pompeius, had been directed. The works of Agrippa were planned on a vast scale, to strengthen the city on its vulnerable side; but the Romans had jealously interfered. In some places the walls had scarcely risen from their foundations when he was forbidden to proceed with them. But they had been carried on hastily by the Sanhedrim in the first years of the insurrection, and the fortifications were completed, though not perhaps in their full proportions, when the enemy appeared before them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Antiq. Jud.* xix. 7. 2., *Bell. Jud.* v. 4. 2. Tacitus (*Hist.* v. 12.) says

The circuit of these exterior defences may have measured about four miles, and the ordinary population could scarcely amount to 200,000; but this number was vastly increased on occasion of the great festivals when the Jews thronged to their national temple from all quarters.<sup>1</sup> The inroads of the Romans into the rural districts of Galilee, Samaria, and Peræa had driven vast multitudes, as we have seen, to the capital for shelter, and as the spring of the year advanced, these were still further swelled by the influx of Paschal worshippers. Tacitus estimates at 600,000 the number inclosed within the walls at the period of the siege; and this estimate, great as it is compared with the extent of accommodation, is far less than what we might infer from certain statements of Josephus.<sup>2</sup> Within the rampart of this triple city were several places of strength. The citadel was the castle Antonia, so called by Herod in honour of his patron the Triumvir. The towers Hippicus, Phasaelus and Mariamne, with probably some others, were separate fortresses constructed for mutual support. The Temple itself, surrounded by an outer and inner wall, was capable of resisting very formidable attacks. It comprised an outer court of one stade or 600 feet each way, lined with double or triple porticos, and within this an inner area, subdivided into four compartments, and containing the shrine without an idol, the mysterious Holy of Holies. In extent and the grandeur of its proportions as well as in decoration, this temple far

Extent and  
population of  
Jerusalem.

Its citadel and  
towers.

The Temple.

that after Agrippa's death the Sanhedrim had purchased the permission or connivance of Claudius for continuing the work. Thrupp, *Ancient Jerusalem*, p. 196.

<sup>1</sup> Josephus estimates the extent at thirty-three stades, which agrees very closely with the indications of the ground. See the Plan. In the time of Ptolemy Lagus, or at the founding of Alexandria, the population is computed by the same author (*contr. Apion.* i. 22.) at 120,000. The extent had doubled since that time; but some allowance should be made for his habitual exaggeration.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius states the number roundly at 3,000,000 (*Hist. Eccl.* iii. 5.), from a passage in Josephus, which will be referred to hereafter.



exceeded any edifice of the kind in Rome: the outer court of the Capitol was only 200 feet square, and its inner cell no doubt proportionably diminutive. The palace of the kings of Judea I have already described as not less superior in magnificence to the abodes of Augustus and Tiberius.<sup>1</sup> The whole city, upon which many despots had lavished their wealth, as far surpassed Rome, at least before Nero's restorations, in grandeur, as it fell short of it in size and population.

With the closing days of the year 69 the empire had been won for the Flavian family, and its chiefs were now at leisure to direct all its forces against the two foreign foes who had so long profited by its divisions, and overwhelm the isolated revolts of Gaul and Judea. Titus conducts an army against Jerusalem. A. D. 70.  
A. U. 823. Vespasian, preparing to seat himself on the throne of the Cæsars, had instructed his son to open his fourth campaign with the investment of Jerusalem, every outer bulwark of which had been successively reduced by the operations of preceding years. Titus united four legions in this service, the Fifth, the Tenth, the Fifteenth, which were previously in the country, and the Twelfth from Syria, to which were added detachments of the Third and Twenty-second from Alexandria. Twenty cohorts of auxiliaries, with eight squadrons of cavalry, swelled his ranks, and he was joined by the contingents of Agrippa, Sohemus, and Antiochus king of Commagene, together with some bands of Arabs, between whom and the Jews there existed ancient feuds.<sup>2</sup> The numbers with which Vespasian had commenced the struggle have been com-

<sup>1</sup> The principal passages in Josephus for the description of the Temple are *Antiq. Jud.* xv. 11. 3. and *Bell. Jud.* v. 5. Comp. Tac. *Hist.* v. 12.: "Templum in modum arcis propriique muri, labore et opere ante alios: ipsæ porticus, quis templum ambiebatur, egregium propugnaculum. Fons perennis aquæ, cavati sub terra montes; et piscinæ cisternæque servandis imbribus: præviderant conditores, ex diversitate morum, crebra bella." The cisterns and subterranean galleries, a marked feature of the spot, are described by all the topographers.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 1.; Salvador, ii. 385.

puted at 60,000; it seems that the forces now led by Titus amounted to not less than 80,000. To these the Jews opposed, from behind their defences, 24,000 trained and well-armed soldiers; but these were supported by a multitude of irregular combatants, who rushed, at every emergency, from the lanes and closes of the city, to man the walls or sally from the gates.<sup>1</sup>

Titus, advancing from the north, planted his camp on the ridge called Scopus, from whence the city was first discovered to the view.<sup>2</sup> The Tenth legion was detached to take up its position on the Mount of Olives, to prevent escape and intercept succour on the side where alone they were to be apprehended.<sup>3</sup> But the Jews did not allow the enemy to form his lines unmolested. Some bloody combats took place before the defenders of Jerusalem consented to retire finally within their walls.<sup>4</sup> Aware of the strength and resolution of his opponents, aware also that he had three distinct lines of rampart to force, and two citadels to master, the Roman leader prepared to conduct the siege according to the rules of art, with the patience and perseverance not less requisite for success than bravery. It was necessary to advance men under cover of hurdles and extended skins to fill up the ditch with fascines, and to construct, almost in contact with the walls, huge banks of earth, supported by stones and stakes, till they reached the level of the ramparts. The face

Operations of  
Titus against  
the outer wall,  
which is at last  
forced.

<sup>1</sup> Josephus states that 10,000 Jews and 5000 Idumeans placed themselves under the orders of Simon; the remainder of the 24,000, of whom 3000 are specially mentioned as the Zealots of Eleazar, were attached to John of Giscala. *Bell. Jud.* v. 6. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Elevated as the position of Jerusalem is, it is nevertheless concealed from the traveller till within a short distance by an almost continuous amphitheatre of hills, which it does not everywhere overtop. From St. Elias, three miles to the south, from Olivet, or Scopus, it bursts upon him in all the majesty of its throne-like eminence. Hence the proud allusions in the Psalms and Prophecies to "the hill," "the mountain," "the throne," "the stronghold," of Jehovah.

<sup>3</sup> Dion (lxvi. 4.) says that the defenders of Jerusalem received succours from their brethren beyond the Euphrates.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* v. 2. 4.; Tac. *Hist.* v. 11.

of these banks was as nearly as possible perpendicular; they sloped in the rear to afford easy ascent to the assailants. They were crowned, moreover, with towers, from which missiles of all kinds might be hurled by the strength of men's arms, or from engines adapted for the purpose.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the skill and spirit of the defenders were directed to overthrowing these constructions as fast as they were erected, and the mass of wood necessarily employed in them afforded aliment for fire. A successful sally enabled the Jews to get in the rear of these embankments, to attack the camp of the Romans, and destroy the munitions of war laid up for the service of the siege. The assailants were obliged to resume their operations with the mine and the battering-ram. The chambers they excavated beneath the walls were constantly countermined by the defenders; furious combats were waged in the darkness, and the miners were sometimes confounded by the attack of wild bears, and even of bees, let loose in the narrow galleries among them. The attempts to board the city from the banks, and to surprise it from underground, having equally failed, the battering engines were still plied with persevering resolution; stones and darts, boiling water and oil, were in vain poured down upon the covering which protected the assailants; at last the massive wall crumbled in dust before them, and the Romans stood triumphant within the outer line of defences.<sup>2</sup>

Since the entire overthrow of the moderate faction the affairs of the Jews had been conducted with far greater vigour. The chiefs of the Zealots, ably seconded by their creatures, whom they had installed in all places of trust and honour, carried everything before them. Though, while the Romans were

The population of Jerusalem overawed by the resolution of the Zealots.

<sup>1</sup> Valerius Flaccus, in the invocation of his poem, gives a picturesque description of Titus:

"Solymo nigrantem pulvere fratrem,  
Spargentemque faces, et in omni turre furentem."

He was wounded in the left shoulder, and his hand continued weak in consequence. Dion. lxvi. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* v. 7. 2.



still distant, they had continued to quarrel among themselves, and one of them had fallen by the hands of a rival, from the first appearance of the enemy before the walls all private contests had been suspended, and the operations of the defence, bold, skilful, and determined, had been carried on, at every gate and in every tower, with one heart and one mind. This unanimity in action was effected by the energy rather than the numerical strength of the dominant faction. Among the multitudes that crowded the streets of Jerusalem many no doubt were eager to escape from their fears and sufferings by instant submission; sentiments of honour, patriotism, and even religion succumbed before the pangs of destitution and the apprehension of approaching famine. The desperate resolution of their armed defenders had distressed rather than animated the unarmed populace. In the first instance Titus had attempted conciliation. He had sent Josephus to the foot of the gates to counsel submission, with the offer of honourable terms. But the chiefs of the army had not suffered him to be heard; they had driven him with bow-shots from the wall. When the Romans after six weeks' toil found themselves still before the second rampart with a second and again a third siege in prospect, they determined to change their policy, and work on the fears of the besieged. They threatened to reduce them by blockade. Titus drew a line of circumvallation round the city, at a distance of one or two fur-  
The Roman circumvallation.
longs from the walls, which was completed by three days' continuous labour of the whole army.<sup>1</sup> The distress of the people, cut off from all external supply, increased rapidly. Multitudes rushed frantically to the gates, and flung themselves into the inclosed space without, imploring permission of the Romans to depart into the country without arms or baggage. But Titus sternly refused. To deter them from the attempt, and teach them that they had no hope but in surrendering the city, he ordered the captives to

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* v. 12. 2.

be suspended on crosses round the walls, and continued for several days to inflict this cruel punishment upon all that fell into his hands.<sup>1</sup> The fugitives shrank back with piteous cries into the city, but their murmurs were unavailing; the chiefs and the soldiers maintained their dogged resolution, and in the midst of famine and pestilence, and the wailings of seers and prophets, still offered the daily prayers and performed the daily sacrifice in the Temple, invoking the Lord of Hosts to their aid, and looking for the promised Messiah.

The Romans continued to press the siege with repeated attacks upon the second wall and the citadel Antonia, and suffered many serious losses: they sent Josephus again and again in vain, to induce the defenders to capitulate; but they trusted more in the effect of the blockade, which became daily more distressing. The Zealots, regardless of the sufferings of the people, made rigid perquisitions for the sustenance of their soldiers, and great was the horror which pervaded all ranks when their officers, led by the scent of sodden flesh to the chamber of the widow Maria, discovered in her dish the mangled limbs of the child she had murdered for her meal. At an earlier period, while the Romans were still admitted within the city, a crazy enthusiast known as Joshua, the son of Hanan, had stalked, as one possessed, through the public places, exclaiming, *Woe to Jerusalem*. Rebuked and scourged in the presence of the procurator, he had refused to give any account of himself or explain the meaning of his ill-omened cry: checked for a season he now resumed it more vehemently than ever, and continued to traverse the streets, repeating, *A voice of ruin from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South; a voice of ruin against the City and against the Temple, against the bride and the bridegroom, and against all the people!* Some listened to him with pity, some with

<sup>1</sup> The Romans seemed to have excused these atrocities by affirming that the fugitives from Jerusalem poisoned their water and killed their stragglers. Dion, lxi. 5. At one time there was so much dejection in the camp of the besiegers that many of them deserted and took refuge in the besieged city.

fear; some thrust an alms into his hand; others scoffed and menaced him; but none ventured to punish him. Thus he went on wailing from day to day: at last he added to his list of woes, *Woe to me also!* At the same instant he was stricken with a stone from a Roman catapult, and fell dead on the ground.<sup>1</sup> The city was filled with reports of the fearful prodigies which were now remembered to have occurred before the outbreak of the present troubles; of comets and meteors, supposed to have announced the approaching downfall of the nation; men and chariots had battled in the air; the gates of the Temple had burst open of their own accord; and on the solemn day of Pentecost a voice *more than human* had been heard exclaiming, *Let us depart hence!*<sup>2</sup>

While, however, these portents struck terror into the hearts of the multitude, bolder spirits were not wanting among them, who consulted no omen but the voice of patriotism, and maintained that the nearer ruin impended, the nearer was the hour of deliverance. The day was at hand, they asserted, the day predicted in their priestly records, when the East should wax in power, and men go forth from Judea to rule the world. The Romans, listening credulously to every oracle, foreign or domestic, pointed with exultation to Titus and Vespasian, who issued from Judea to assume the government of the empire. Josephus, with a remnant of national feeling, or regard for the opinion of his countrymen, shrinks from interpreting the prophecy at all. The Christians, as is well known, have generally inclined to see in it an allusion to the Messianic visions of the elder prophets.<sup>3</sup> Indeed but a few

The Christians  
retire from Je-  
rusalem.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vi. 5. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. *Hist.* v. 13.: "Expassæ repente delubri fores, et audita major humana vox, Exceedere Deos: simul ingens motus excedentium." Comp. Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* i. c.: πρῶτον μὲν κινήσεως ἀντιλαβέσθαι ἔφασαν καὶ κτύπον, μετὰ δὲ τὰυτα καὶ φωνῆς ἀθρόας, μεταβαίνωμεν ἐντεῦθεν. It is remarkable that both the Pagan and the Jewish writer make use of the plural number.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. *Hist.* i. c.; Suet. *Vesp.* 4.; Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* v. 4., who thinks fit to disparage the prophecy (probably Daniel, vii. 12, 15, 27, 28.): τὸ ἐπ᾽ ἄραν



weeks before a little band of outcasts, rich in faith, but bare of this world's goods, had gone forth from Jerusalem and Judea, on the first approach of the Romans, and taken refuge beyond the Jordan in Pella, a village of the Decapolis.<sup>1</sup> These were the disciples of Jesus Christ, who had set up their church, after his departure, in the Jewish capital, and who clung, even against the convictions of their more scattered brethren, to many prejudices of their ancient faith. But when the impending fall of Jerusalem opened their eyes to the Scriptures which were written for their warning, they broke the last bands of patriotism and superstition which attached them to the Temple and the Altar, and proclaimed themselves missionaries of the new faith, without a backward glance of lingering reminiscence.<sup>2</sup> Then it might be said that the prophecy was spiritually fulfilled: the preachers of Christianity went forth from Judea for the moral conquest of the empire and the world. Much as we may admire the enthusiasm of the Jewish patriots, which does honour to our common humanity, still more freely may we sympathize with the inspiration of these soldiers of Christendom, who left father and mother, home and country, and all the associations on which they had fed from infancy, for the glory of God and the love of a spiritual Redeemer.

But disease and slaughter were thinning the Jewish ranks, and their numbers diminished even faster than their provisions. The Romans grew impatient of the delay. Again they pushed their engines to the walls, again they piled embankments against them, again they mined their foundations; while day

Titus captures the fortress Antonia, and invites the Jews to capitulate.

αὐτοῦς μάλιστα πρὸς τὸν πόλεμον ἦν χρησμός ἀμφίβολος, κ. τ. λ. For the Christian interpretation it may be sufficient to refer to Paley and Lardner.

<sup>1</sup> Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> The Christians derived their warning from St. Matt. xxiv. 16. and St. Luke, xxi. 21.: τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φεγγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη. According to the modern Jewish view: "Les Chrétiens de l'école spéciale de Josué ou Jésus de Nazareth, les Chrétiens-Nazaréens, se dégageaient alors du système d'expectative et de défense particulier à la loi Juive: ils se transformaient en instrument organisé de propagande religieuse et morale, de conquête, d'invasion." Salvador, ii. 23.

by day the obstinate defenders overthrew their works and baffled their approaches. The perseverance with which Titus renewed his elaborate constructions after every failure was not less eminent than the fortitude of John and Simon. After every resource of skill had failed, Antonia was at last carried by surprise, and the Romans occupied the post which overlooked the Temple.<sup>1</sup> The siege had already lasted three months. Seven days were now employed in the destruction of the citadel, one wing only being reserved as a watch tower. All the buildings round it were thrown down to make room for the works required for the attack on the Temple, and the Lower City was at the same time demolished. Titus had now relaxed from his earlier severity. Large numbers of the population received their lives on submission, while the more desperate fled for refuge to the Temple and to Mount Zion. He continued to press offers of accommodation on the remnant of the defenders; but these were still met with unabated defiance. Once more was Josephus put forward to confer with the people on the wall, and entreat them to spare the holy place. He addressed them, like the Assyrian of old, in the Hebrew language, that all might understand him; but John, perceiving (so at least Josephus assures us) the impressing he was making, sternly interrupted him, declaring that they had nought to fear, for Jerusalem was the Lord's, and the Lord would protect it.<sup>2</sup>

But Josephus, it might be imagined, was reputed a traitor, and was personally odious. The representations of the captives of the Lower City, now admitted to terms by their conquerors, might possibly be less obnoxious. Accordingly, a number of these people were ranged before the gates of the Temple and instructed to adjure their compatriots, with tears and prayers, to yield to a clement foe, and spare the cherished shrine of

The Zealots refuse to hearken to terms.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vi. 1. 7. Antonia was taken on the seventeenth of Panemus, i. e. the beginning of July.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. vi. 2. 1.: ὥς οὐκ ἂν ποτε δείσειεν ἄλωσιν, Θεοῦ γὰρ ὑπάρχειν τὴν πόλιν.

Jehovah from the ruin which must inevitably befall it. But the Zealots were obdurate. They erected their engines on the gate itself and poured from thence a shower of stones and darts, which strewed the terrace in front with bodies of their own countrymen, *as thick as a cemetery*.<sup>1</sup> The defenders of Jerusalem had now, in their despair, lost all respect for sacred things, as well as tenderness for their kindred. They flung open the recesses of the Temple, and carried on their operations regardless of religious usage, profaning the Holy of Holies with their unhallowed presence, and polluting with bloodstained hands the golden vines and the golden table.<sup>2</sup>

The demolition of Antonia and its outer bulwarks had cleared the space required for works against the northern wall of the Temple, its position rendering it on every other side inaccessible. Taking his stand on the remaining turret of the fortress, Titus, having in vain expostulated with his opponents, and declared that he would save their holy place even in their own despite, directed the operations of his engineers, and gave the signal for assault. But his materials, often consumed and as often replaced, were now less abundant, and had to be drawn from a greater distance: if the defences of the Temple were less formidable than those of the outer city, the works advanced against them were perhaps proportionally slender: if the assailants were encouraged by success, the defenders were maddened by despair, and baffled all their attacks with

Operations directed against the Temple.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vi. 2, 3. Such is the comparison of our author: ὡς τὸ κύκλω μὲν ἱερὸν ἀπὸ πλῆθους νεκρῶν προσεοικέναι πολυανδρίῳ: such a cemetery, I suppose he means, as the places in which the bodies of slaves and strangers were exposed or imperfectly buried, as in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and the Esquiline field at Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. l. c.; τοῖς δ' ἁγίοις καὶ ἀβάτοις μετὰ τῶν ὅπλων εἰσεπήδων, θερμὸς ἔτι τὰς χεῖρας ἐξ ὁμοφύλων ἔχοντες φόνων. The warmth of Josephus must be accepted with due qualification. The golden table and the enormous vines of the same metal are mentioned by Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* v. 5. 4.), among the most splendid objects within the Temple, after it had lost the Ark, the Mercy Seat, the Urim and Thummim and the Shechinah.



unfailing resolution. Sometimes the Jews sallied from their strongholds and even crossed the vale of Kedron on their right, and dashed themselves in vain against the Roman circumvallation; again the Romans, in the darkness of the night, scaled the low rampart of the Temple, and effected a lodgment for a moment, only to be driven from it headlong, when the dawn revealed them to their enemies. On one occasion the defenders purposely evacuated the western gallery of their outer court, and allowed the Romans to climb into it. The stone pillars were surmounted with wooden beams and rafters, and in the space between these and the roof they had piled a mass of combustibles, to which they now set fire, and consumed, along with the portico itself, a great number of their assailants.<sup>1</sup> But as the defence of the outer wall relaxed, the missiles of the besiegers became more effective. They continued to cast their brands into the inclosure; care was no longer taken to extinguish them as they fell, and at length the range of the northern portico, roofed also with wood, was wrapped in flames. It was now impossible to maintain the outer ramparts. John and Simon, with the best equipped of their followers, withdrew altogether from the Temple, and sought refuge in the Upper City, while retreat was still open. They crossed the connecting causeway, and then broke it down behind them. But the priests, the women, and the unarmed multitude paid no heed to this desertion. The flames which raged on two sides of the holy place seemed to their wild fanaticism a barrier set by God between Himself and the enemy. They crowded with frantic devotion within the second enclosure, and awaited their deliverance in grim security. Meanwhile Titus advanced his engines to the outer wall; but the strength of its compact masonry still defied the battering-rams. He undermined the gates; his engines shook their sustaining bulwarks; but though the surface crumbled, the mass stood firm, and barred ingress. He applied ladders,

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell Jud.* vi. 3. 1.

and the Romans mounted without opposition. On the summit they were met by a remnant of defenders, who still, in the fury of their despair, found strength to hurl them headlong. Finally, the assailants brought fire to the gates, and, meeting again with no resistance, succeeded in melting the silver plates which eased them, and kindling the wood beneath. The flames now cleared the way for their advance, and swept from pillar to pillar, till they enveloped all that was yet standing of the interior porticos. The royal porch of Herod, with its double aisles and central nave, the noblest feature of the Temple, now blazed from end to end.<sup>1</sup> Hundreds of the Jews perished in this storm of fire. Titus called his chiefs together, and deliberated on the fate of the sanctuary. *Destroy it utterly*, exclaimed some; *retain it for ransom*, suggested others; but Titus himself, so at least we are assured by his panegyrist, was anxious at all events to save it. Perhaps he regarded it as a trophy of victory; possibly he had imbibed in his Eastern service some reverence for the mysteries it enshrined; and even the fortunes of his family disposed him to superstition.<sup>2</sup> He ordered the flames to be quenched; but while his soldiers were employed in checking them, the Jews sallied from their inner stronghold; a last struggle ensued. Titus swept the foe from the court with a charge of cavalry, and, as they shut the gates behind them, a Roman, climbing on his comrades' shoulders, flung a blazing brand through a laticed opening. The flames shot up; the Jews shrank, shrieking and yelling, from their parapets. Titus, roused from sleep, to which he had for a moment betaken himself, commanded or implored his men to save their glorious conquest. But his voice was drowned in the tumult; his gestures were disregarded; the soldiers burst the gates or scaled the walls, and rushed in headlong, trampling in their frenzy upon one another, and hewing themselves a way through the shattered masses of the enemy.

<sup>1</sup> For the description of this southern portico, see Joseph. *Antiq.* xv. 11. 3. with Mr. Fergusson's explanation. Thrupp, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vi. 4. 3.

The stair of the Holy Place ran with torrents of blood, over which rolled the bodies of the dead; but the women and children, the old and helpless, had collected around the altar above it, and there was consummated the sacrifice, the bloodiest and the last of the Ancient Covenant. Through the flames and smoke, over the dead and dying, Titus forced his way into the Holy of the Holies, and gazed for a moment on the wonders, so vaunted by the Jews, so disparaged by the Gentiles, which Titus enters the Holy of Holies. neither Gentile nor Jew, the high priest alone excepted, was ever suffered to look upon.<sup>1</sup> Here the fire had not yet penetrated. He rushed forth to provide for its protection, urging his men, with words, and even with blows, to stay the advancing surges. But their fury was deaf, their cupidity was insensible; they had caught sight of gates plated with silver, windows lined with gold; the sanctuary, they had heard, was filled with unimaginable riches, and they feared to be balked of their plunder. While their chief was still parleying with them, a soldier, who had pushed within the veil beside him and remained behind, applied a torch to the door, and enveloped the place in flames. Titus looked back with a sigh, but made no further attempts Conflagration of the Temple to save it. He withdrew despondingly from the spot, and the divine decree was accomplished.<sup>2</sup>

The Jewish chronicler exhausts all his rhetoric in describing the horrors of the scene he had himself witnessed from the camp of the victors. The hill of the Temple was enveloped in a sheet of flame, and the whole city seemed to be involved in a general conflagration. The shouts of the conquerors, the shrieks of the victims, the groans and howls of a nation of spectators in the streets and on the hills surrounding Jerusalem, surpassed all

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vi. 4. 6.: πολλὰ μὲν τῆς παρὰ τοῖς ἀλλοφύλοις φήμης ἀμείνω, τοῦ δὲ κόμπου καὶ τῆς παρὰ τοῖς οἰκείοις δόξης οὐκ ἐλάττω.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vi. 4. 7. It will be seen that the most important treasures of the sanctuary had been previously removed by the priests, and fell afterwards into the hands of the conqueror.



horrors recorded or imagined. The chiefs, deluding their followers to the last, had contrived, as we have seen, to escape the holocaust in the Temple. Behind the walls of the Upper City they stood again, however hopelessly, at bay. But their ramparts were strong, and to the north, where alone the nature of the ground rendered siege operations possible, a deep and broad ditch was excavated in the rock before them. Titus received the acclamations of his soldiers, who saluted him as emperor. He planted his standards at the eastern portal of the Temple, which was still standing, and performed his sacrifices before them; this done, he resumed his tedious work with admirable patience. Once more he charged Josephus to summon the malignants. The renegade was dismissed a last time without a hearing. He came forward in person to the chasm in the bridge, and the Jewish chiefs conferred with him from the other side. The Roman addressed them as an injured yet placable master. He offered life to such as should lay down their arms and acknowledge his authority. To such as persisted in their crime he threatened merciless punishment. The Zealots replied that they had sworn an oath never to surrender: let them pass freely through the gates with their wives and children, and they would abandon their city and betake themselves to the wilderness. Well indeed might they distrust their conqueror. A few unarmed priests, who had cowered among the ruins of the Temple, had just before descended, pressed by hunger, and thrown themselves on his mercy; they had been led straightway to execution, with the brutal sarcasm that those who live by the altar should perish with the altar.<sup>1</sup> On this refusal of the insurgents the emperor declared that the whole city should be razed to the ground, and began at once, in the quarters he held, the work of demolition.

But while preparations were making in the Roman quarters for the reduction of the last stronghold of the Jews, the

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vi. 6. 1.

defenders themselves had broken through all restraints of discipline, and the Upper City was abandoned to rapine and slaughter. Jealousy and discord reigned among the Jews; their chiefs surrendered to them every obnoxious citizen; and thousands were impelled to throw themselves into the hands of the enemy, who granted them for the most part life and liberty. An armed band seized the palace, repulsed an attack of the Romans, put to the sword the multitudes who had taken refuge in it, to the number, as we are told, of four thousand, and divided among themselves the treasures which had been lodged there. One Roman prisoner they slew, and dragged his body through the streets in impotent revenge for their own slaughtered myriads; another they bound for execution in the face of his countrymen, but he contrived to escape from their hands, and reached the Roman lines. It was reported, as an instance of the sternness of the general's discipline, tempered by his personal clemency, that though he refrained from smiting with the axe the soldier who had suffered himself to be captured, he deprived him of his arms, and discharged him with ignominy from the service.<sup>1</sup>

Dissolution of order and discipline among the Jews.

But famine at last was doing the work of the besiegers, more surely than the sword or the catapult. The blockade was strictly kept; provisions failed; the armed slew the unarmed to diminish the number of mouths, but their own strength no longer sufficed for a last attempt to break the lines of circumvallation. A gleam of hope still flickered in their bosoms. The limestone hills of Judea are perforated with numerous caves and fissures, and the site of Jerusalem itself is mined with vaults and galleries, excavated by the hand of man. Here were the storehouses and granaries, the reservoirs and the sewers of the great city; narrow and winding passages led from hill to hill, from building to building beneath the walls, and into the valleys beyond them. It seemed possible

Famine, massacres, and retreat into the vaults beneath the city.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. vi. 7. 1.

to find here a means of exit; the labyrinth might at least afford an impenetrable hiding-place. John and Simon withdrew from the defences of the ramparts, and repaired with the most desperate of their followers to these subterranean retreats, while the Romans occupied the strongholds they had abandoned, and carried fire and slaughter through the streets of the Upper City. Overtaking the crowd of fugitives, fleeing, yet with no asylum to flee to, in these narrow avenues, they slew till they were weary of slaughter; then broke into the houses and loaded themselves with plunder till they could carry off no more. In some dwellings they discovered the bodies of whole families huddled together: hunger had anticipated the sword. From such places the fiercest warriors recoiled with horror, and rushed back into the streets empty-handed.<sup>1</sup>

The Upper City perished in the flames, like the quarters which had been captured before. On the 8th of Gorpæus, Destruction of the Upper City by the Romans. apparently an early day in September, five months and a half after the first investment, Jerusalem ceased to exist.<sup>2</sup> Titus himself advanced step by step through the blazing ruins, admiring the vast strength of the defences, the solidity of the towers, the size of the stones, and the nice adjustment of the masonry.<sup>3</sup> *God has been my helper*, he devoutly exclaimed,—unless, indeed, the words were ascribed to him by the uneasy conscience of the renegade,—*God it was that pulled down the Jews from those formidable walls; for what could the hands*

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vi. 8. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Dion (lxvi. 7.) asserts that Jerusalem was taken on the Sabbath day. He had said the same of its capture by Pompeius, and again by Sosius. Josephus, who would not have passed over such a coincidence, makes no mention of it. Norisius, who fixes the date to Sept. 2., proves that this was not the Sabbath.

<sup>3</sup> At the bottom of the hills in some places, particularly below the area of the temple, there may now be seen some courses of stones of immense proportions, bevelled (that is, the junction between them grooved to some depth), giving a great appearance of solidity. It seems possible that these may be remains of the walls which Titus admired, and which Josephus signalized for their ἀκρίβεια τῆς ἀρμονίας, vi. 9. 1.



*of men or their engines have availed against them!* While he gave orders for the complete destruction of the stronghold which had made so memorable a resistance to the forces of the empire, he directed that three of its towers should be allowed to stand as a monument of its strength, and of his perseverance.<sup>1</sup> With the same deliberation, and on similar principles, he proceeded to deal with the multitudes, who, after the fury of the victors was satiated, still remained to glut their pride or their cupidity. He decreed that those only who were found in arms and resisting should henceforth be slain; all who sued for quarter should be spared, collected together, and numbered. Yet when the tale was completed, the old and useless were passed in cold blood on the edge of the sword. The tallest and best looking were next chosen to grace the conqueror's triumph; of the rest all above the age of seventeen were drafted off to the quarries in Egypt, or condemned to fight with beasts in the theatres of Antioch and Cæsarea. All the children were sold as slaves. But the fierce animosity of the soldiers outran the barbarity of their officers, and was met with equal exasperation on the part of the victims. Of the whole number, eleven thousand if we may believe the most terrible story in Josephus, perished from starvation, some denied aliment by their keepers, others refusing to accept it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The bases of the towers Hippius and Phasael are believed by many topographers still to exist at the foot of certain turrets of the modern citadel of Jerusalem. Williams, art. *Jerusalem*, in *Dict. Class. Geography*.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph. vi. 9. 2.: *ξοθήρησαν δ' αὐτῶν ἐν αἷς διέκρινεν ἡμέραις ὑπ' ἐνδείας χίλιοι πρὸς τοῖς μυρίοις, οἱ μὲν ὑπὸ μίσους τῶν φυλάκων μὴ μεταλαμβάνοντες τροφῆς, οἱ δ' οὐ προσιέμενοι διδομένην.* According to this author 90,000 Jews were made captives in the course of the whole war, a number which seems by no means excessive. But I cannot persuade myself to place in my text his enumeration of the victims of the siege, which he makes to amount to 1,100,000. This estimate, he adds, will not appear extravagant when we remember that the multitudes which flocked to Jerusalem for the passover were shut up in the city, and that the priests, when interrogated by Cestius about the number of their people, had calculated the number of Paschal lambs in a given year at 256,500, and the number of communicants, at little more than ten to each, at

Fierce and cruel as the leaders of the Jewish patriots had proved themselves, we could nevertheless have wished to learn that they too fell at last, sword in hand, on the last tower or behind the last breastwork of their city. But both Simon and John, as we have seen, had sought escape, or at least concealment, in its underground galleries; nor were they successful. John, pressed by hunger, came presently forth and surrendered himself openly to the conqueror. Simon had taken with him tools and workmen, as well as food, and laboured to excavate a passage till his supplies failed him. He then thought, in his last extremity, to impose upon the Romans by contriving to rise arrayed magnificently in white or purple from the centre of the Temple platform. The awe or terror of the spectators soon abated when they saw, beneath the royal or priestly robes, the squalid features of their victim. Detected by a Roman officer, he was led bound to Titus. Both to the Romans and to his countryman Josephus he seems to have been more particularly obnoxious than his colleague. While John was granted his life, and kept without public disgrace in perpetual confinement, Simon was reserved for the special ornament of the triumph, for ignominy, and for death.<sup>1</sup>

Capture of  
John and Si-  
mon.

This, says the historian, was the sixth time that the Jewish capital had been captured, the second time that it had been destroyed. When it rose again from its ashes, it was by the hands, not of its own people, but of Roman colonists; and many are the generations which have since witnessed a siege and a sack of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Of the remainder of this war, which this signal blow did not immediately terminate, there needs little be said. The Jews

Conclusion of  
the war.

2,700,000. vi. 9. 3. Comp. Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 5. The physical impossibility of such numbers being accommodated within the area of the city has been often demonstrated.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jerusalem is said to have been *taken* seventeen times in all,—sometimes, as under the Persian Chosru and the Crusaders, with terrible slaughter; but it has been *overthrown* only by Nebuchadnezzar and Titus.

still maintained themselves in some fortresses of Judea, and the defence of Machærus and Massada adds another brilliant gleam to the sunset of their glory. But the final result of these operations was no longer doubtful, and the Roman chief did not feel that his presence was required at them. His cares were directed to organizing the government of his conquests. The residence of Titus at Berytus, and again at Cæsarea, was marked by bloody shows in the circus, where he solemnized the birthdays of his father and brother with the slaughter of multitudes of Jewish captives. From thence he returned to witness the completion of his instructions with regard to Jerusalem, and, leaving the Tenth legion in garrison on the spot, carried with him the Fifth and Fifteenth into Egypt. His acceptance of the title of Imperator from his soldiers was calculated to give umbrage to the jealousy of the reigning emperor, and his indiscretion in wearing the diadem in a religious ceremony at Memphis was interpreted perhaps by the courtiers to his disadvantage: it was remembered, moreover, that his younger brother, with far less personal merits, had betrayed too keen a zest for imperial distinctions. Titus was well aware that his conduct was liable to misconstruction. Hastening accordingly to Rome as soon as affairs permitted him, he presented himself unannounced in the palace, exclaiming, *Here am I, father!* Vespasian, with good sense and feeling, requited him with confidence and honours, associating him in the triumph which followed, and in the cares and gratifications of empire.<sup>1</sup> That triumph, earned with more toil and peril than any one perhaps of the three hundred and twenty which had preceded it, has been rendered memorable to posterity by monuments still existing.<sup>2</sup> Even

Titus returns  
to Rome and  
triumphs with  
Vespasian.

<sup>1</sup> Suet. *Tit.* 5, 6. This association in the empire is selected for the subject of a special compliment by Silius (*Punic.* iii. 603.). Dion remarks (lxvi. 7.) that neither Vespasian nor Titus took the cognomen of Judaicus. "Ob contemptum gentis," says Reimar.

<sup>2</sup> The Christian historian Orosius, in his satisfaction at the overthrow of the Jews, looks with special favour on this Judæan triumph: "Pulchrum et igno-



in the confusion of the storm and the conflagration, some of the choicest ornaments of the Temple may have been seized and saved by the conquerors. Many of them had perhaps been hidden by pious hands before the last crisis of disaster. But after the capture of the city, certain priests emerging from their hiding-places had saved their own lives by delivering the treasures they had secreted. The sacred furniture of the Holy Place was borne before the Emperors to the Capitol—the candlestick with seven branches, the golden table, the trumpets which announced the year of Jubilee, the book of the Law and the Vessel of incense.<sup>1</sup> When, some years later, an arch was erected to commemorate the victory of Titus, these illustrious trophies were sculptured upon it, with figures of Jewish captives surmounted by an emblem of the victor's apotheosis.<sup>2</sup> These witnesses to the truth of the history I have related are scanned at this day by Christians passing to and fro between the Colosseum and the forum: and at this day the Jew refuses to walk beneath them, and creeps stealthily by the side, with downcast eyes or countenance averted.<sup>3</sup>

tum antea cunctis mortalibus inter trecentos viginti triumphos, qui a conditione Urbis usque ad id tempus acti erant, hoc spectaculum fuit, patrem et filium uno triumphali curru vectos, gloriosissimam ab his, qui patrem et filium offenderant, victoriam reportasse." Domitian, says Suetonius (*Domit.* 2.), accompanied the triumphal car, on a white horse; but "black care" sate doubtless behind him.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vii. 5. 5., compared with the sculptures on the Arch of Titus at Rome.

<sup>2</sup> The Jewish trophies are sculptured in bas-relief on the inside of the arch, beneath the vaulting. Opposite to these is another bas-relief, representing Titus in the quadriga, the reins held by the goddess Roma. In the centre of the arch Titus is borne to heaven by an eagle. It may be conjectured that these ornaments to his glory were designed after the death of Vespasian, and completed after his own. Another monument of the Jewish triumph exists in the medals of Vespasian, bearing the figure of "Judea captive" beneath the palm-tree. Eckhel, vi. 326. For the subsequent history of the Jewish trophies, which can be traced down to the time of Belisarius, see Burton's *Antiquities of Rome*, i. 290., from Tillemont, *Empereurs Romains*.

<sup>3</sup> For this popular statement Burton refers to Madame de Staël's *Corinne*, chap. iv. That imaginative writer does not profess to give her authority, but

The annexation of Palestine to the empire was now finally confirmed, and the provinces given in charge to an imperial procurator. Vespasian founded no colony to secure his conquest: he settled 800 of his veterans in the town of Emmaus seven miles from Jerusalem, but he assigned them no territorial possessions. The whole soil was confiscated and sold for the benefit of the fiscus to the highest bidder. A remnant of the native population entered again, perhaps, into possession of their estates, but at the price of a tribute equal in amount to the fee simple, with the forfeiture of their polity, and dissolution of their chief bond of union. The contribution of two drachmas, which every child of Israel throughout the world had hitherto given annually to the Temple, he was now required to transfer to the Capitol.<sup>1</sup> With the reduction of Palestine the consolidation of the empire was completed. From the Mersey to the Dead Sea no nation remained erect, and the resistance of the last free men on her frontiers had been expiated with their blood. The overthrow of Judea, with all the monuments of an ancient but still living civilization, was the greatest crime of the conquering republic. It commenced in wanton aggression, and was effected with a barbarity of which no other example occurs in the records of civilization. Jerusalem shared the fate of Tarquinii and Corinth; but the Romans, stalking among the ruins of Zion, seemed unconscious that they had annihilated a nation more important in the history of the world than Etruria, or even than Greece. Yet not altogether annihilated. The homeless Jews, scattered, as captives or fugitives, more widely than ever, bore throughout the empire and beyond it the seeds of the law delivered from Sinai, the fortitude which neither

Final annexation of Palestine and consolidation of the empire.

only remarks: "Il est à souhaiter, pour l'honneur des Juifs, que cette anecdote soit vraie: les longs ressouvenirs conviennent aux longs malheurs."

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* vii. 6. 6. Dion, lxi. 7., where see Reimar's note, and references to Suet. *Domit.* 12.; Tertullian, *Apol.* 18.; Appian, *Syriac.* p. 119.; and Origen, *Opp.* i. 28. ed. Ruæ.; showing how long and how constantly this exaction was maintained.

Egyptian, nor Syrian, nor Roman could bend or break, the hopes which delay had not extinguished, the maxims which patriarchs and prophets had revered. Even on the frontiers of Palestine the ancient voices were again uplifted. To the temple of Jerusalem succeeded the schools of Tiberias; and the influence of the Rabbis has in all ages been felt, if not always acknowledged, by Christians and Mahometans, by the sages of both the West and East.

Nor is this all. The Temple fell in the early days of August; the exact date we have not perhaps the means of ascertaining. Josephus indeed, embracing the fond  
 Concluding re-  
 marks.      imagination of his countrymen, was persuaded that its final destruction occurred precisely on the day, the 10th of the month Ab, on which it had been once before destroyed by the Assyrians, being 1130 years, 7 months and 15 days from its first foundation by Solomon, 539 years and 45 days from its restoration under Cyrus.<sup>1</sup> But if we may indulge in the observation of such coincidences, none is more remarkable than the fall by fire, within eight months of each other, of the two national temples of the Romans and the Jews. We have remarked throughout this history the close political connexion, and at the same time the social distrust and jealousy, existing between these peoples. We have long anticipated the decisive war which was destined at last to spring from them. But we have discovered, at the root of

<sup>1</sup> Joseph. vi. 4. 8. Our author is generally supposed to use the names of the Macedonian months for the Jewish, which most nearly corresponded with them. Thus Lous represents Ab, which comprises (normally) part of July and August. But as the Hebrew months are lunar, with a thirteenth intercalated periodically, the solar season to which they correspond may vary to the extent of eleven days. The 10th of Lous, therefore, on which the Temple was burnt, may be at the end of July or early in August. Modern chronologists have cut the knot by making Lous to correspond exactly with the Roman August, and so fixing the date in question to August 10. See *Art de Vérifier les Dates*: après J. C. iv. 188. Clinton, more discreetly, abstains from determining it. *Fast. Hell.* iii. 353., *Fast. Rom.* i. 58. The Jews keep their annual fast, in memory of the fall of the Temple, on the 9th of Ab. Salvador, *Domin. Rom. en Judée*, ii. 468.



this mutual repulsion, so unnaturally controlled, a conflict of ideas still more grave and lasting. Palestine was the cradle of the Gospel; the Jews the people first appointed to expound it. The destruction, never to be repaired, of their material Temple cut the cords which bound the New Faith to its local habitation, and launched it, under the hand of Providence, on its career of spiritual conquest; while the boasted restoration of the Capitol was a vain attempt to retain hold of the past, to revive the lost or perishing, to reattach to new conditions of thought an outworn creed of antiquity.

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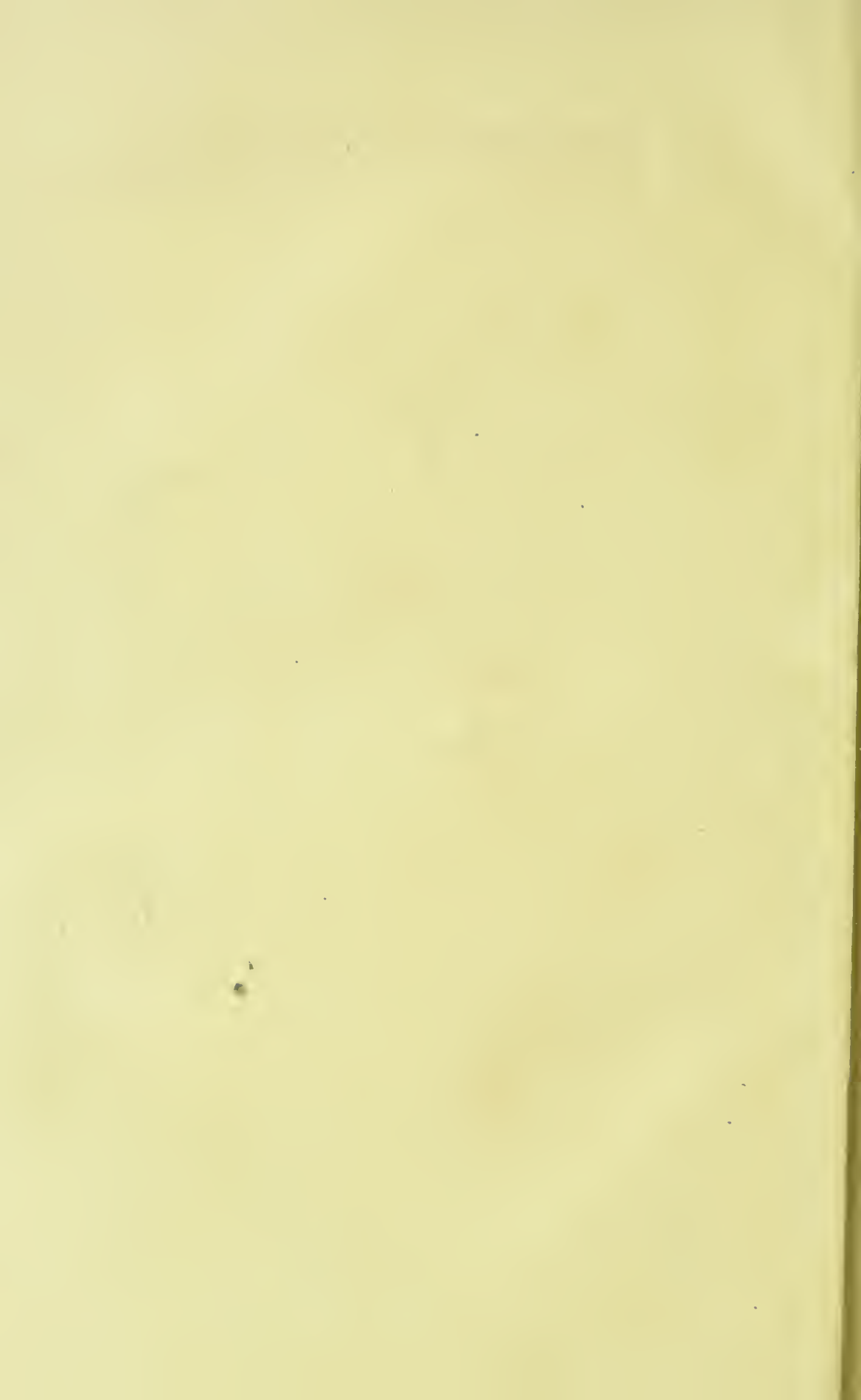












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